DE VERE;

OR, THE

MAN OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF TREMAINE.

My free drift
Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of wax.

SHAKSPEARE.

Power to do good, is the true and lawful end of aspiring: for good *thoughts* (though God accept them), yet, towards men, are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground.

BACON.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1827.

SHACKELL AND BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S COURT.

DE VERE.

CHAPTER I.

A CONFLICT.

This above all, to thine own self be true;
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

SHAKSPEARE.

DE VERE had observed, with watchful though silent anxiety, the progress which he could not help thinking Lord Cleveland had made in the good graces of his cousin, as we have developed it at the end of our last volume. Lord Mowbray's joy was evident, and the Marchioness's favour not disguised. Even Lady Eleanor seemed not ill disposed to him. It was only Clayton who showed some gloom, though upon

every occasion that offered, he was the Earl's most obsequious and very humble servant.—De Vere also watched Constance's conduct to himself, and certainly was less pleased with it than usual; nor was he consoled, when he learned from his mother the advice she had given to her niece in regard to the Earl.

"These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience."

So felt De Vere, when he told his mother that he entirely agreed with her in the propriety of the advice she had given.

"My mother," said De Vere, "certainly loves me, but has acted perfectly like herself; let me not disgrace *her*." His nights, however, were sleepless.

"And what, and where am I?" said he to himself, two mornings after Lord Cleveland's arrival: "and what my resolution, never even to attempt to interfere with Constance? She is now evidently courted to an alliance, equal to her, and by a man—" He could not finish the sentence.

In truth, with all Lord Cleveland's dazzling superiorities in many points, De Vere could not

bring himself to say, that in any of the worthier qualities of heart, disposition, or character, the nobleman was equal to, or to be named with his cousin. The dairy-house, its garden and the brook, and the thousand friendly discussions of their summer mornings, all rose before him, and sooth to say, saddened his heart.

But he remembered the vehemence of his honourable pledge, uncalled for, indeed, but made before his mother to Constance herself, that "though he had a mind to distinguish and adore merit, and a heart to feel beauty, yet he had firmness to brave and relinquish all, if duty to the possessor of them required it."

"Yes!" said he, "I plumed myself upon my resolution at the time; let me not now shrink from trial. And yet," he continued, going on with the soliloquy, "but for advantages that are all adventitious, I might enter the lists with this Lord Cleveland. His are the gifts of the world; his the King's favour; his the applause of the times: yet this pure and gentle, but firm-minded girl, once looked at him unblenched, nay repudiated his advances."

The steps of De Vere here became quicker; when stopping suddenly, he exclaimed, "Whe-

ther she will continue to do this is a question; but no question of mine. Even could I think myself preferred,—(maddening thought!) and she were poor!—though I might beg my bread *with* her from door to door,—being what she is, I cannot beg it *of* her."

In this train of musing, he paced the proud terrace of the castle, and contemplated its romantic site more intensely than ever, though seemingly with a view to force a diversion.

The terrace, as has been said, immediately overlooked the Dove, and, at a distance, the Trent; seaming the plains of the two pastoral counties of Derby and Stafford, as if with veins of sparkling silver. Though now long accustomed to it, he never saw this pleasing landscape of plenty and peace, without feeling himself elevated above the struggles of the world; his heart filled always with the bounties of Him who created it; and never did Lord Cleveland, who suddenly joined him, find him in a worse mood to receive a lesson on the world's passing scene, which he was now prepared to give him. This noble person, notwithstanding all his newly kindled hopes, had also passed a tumultuous night. The two great passions which we have described as dividing his soul, now reigned there

with peculiar fierceness. The dispatch brought by Eustace tore him away; while the augmented power of Constance resisted all the effort made by his ambition to incline him to move. Yet he was tortured with doubt; and the little hope which his pride had conceived from the change in Constance's manner, slight as it was, was dashed with a thousand fears. He had heard De Vere was his rival; and when he thought of his youth, contrasted with his own age, but still more when he thought of his mental qualities, he was filled with terror. But he might be misinformed; he had watched them during the day, and saw no symptoms of it. If not a rival, could he make him a friend? He knew his political views, and resolved to try.

When he joined De Vere, however, upon the terrace, he was himself so struck with the beautiful scene which seemed to engross his companion, that he could not help opening in a very different strain from what he had intended.

"These are beautiful plains," said he, "and I understand that that flourishing succession of farms, those woods, and the village with the ancient spire upon the knoll overhanging the river, are all within the domain of your noble uncle, the descendant of that "wrath-kindled

gentleman," Thomas Mowbray Duke of Norfolk."

"I have so understood," said De Vere.

"They are worthy the grace of such a castle," replied Cleveland; "and do you know what the contemplation of them prompts?"

"Something no doubt sublime."

"No, by my sober faith," continued the Earl, looking unaffectedly grave, "but simply this, — that if I were lord of such a castle, the dark passages of public offices should not daily see me picking my steps to the major-domos that guard them, to haggle about a clerk or a tide-waiter; nor should the minister himself see me any where but in my place in the senate, or as his friend and companion in power, at his own house."

"A good resolve," said De Vere; "but I know not its application."

"Only that I am astounded when I think that the spirit of the Mowbrays, or of any owner of such a domain, should, in the changes of time, evaporate in the mere ambition of political management, and think it sufficient pride to be able to succeed in the acquisition of a little trumpery patronage. When I have seen the silken barons (as they have been called) of

modern times, and thought of their iron ancestors, I have wondered."

It must be owned that this speech of the Earl, was a tribute wrung from him at the moment by the force of sentiment; for though he was far too lofty to lose time in the antechambers of office, which all flew open to him as if by magic, at his approach, not a man in the state was so devoted to political intrigues, or the little managements of patronage which he thus affected to despise.

De Vere knew this and smiled, but could not help feeling the force of his observation, which was so much in unison with his own, that he brooded over it a minute, and remembered it on many an occasion afterwards.

At length breaking silence, "Your new philosophy," said he, "sits well upon you, and is no doubt prompted by the place. How far it would hold at Whitehall might be made a question."

"Ay! that confounded Whitehall," replied the Earl; "why have you conjured it up to dissipate the dreams which this noble place and its youthful mistress have created? But you are just embarking in the world; I have seen, encountered, and, shall I own? am tired of it."

"For a tired man, however," replied De Vere, "I think your Lordship is still tolerably vigorous, for nothing seems to go on without you."

"So people are pleased to say," replied the Earl.

"And do they not say true?"

"If they would imply that this satisfies me," continued Cleveland, "certainly not."

"And why not?"

"I scarcely know, for every thing seems to prosper; yet, knowing your integrity, to you I can own, that with the whole world seemingly at my foot—I am not happy."

De Vere could only listen in silence.

"I have things pressing upon me," continued Cleveland, "which draw me different ways, and tear me to pieces between them. Perhaps I want your advice; but I trust I am not intruding upon you, unwelcome egotism. I hope I am not wrong in counting you, if only as your uncle's nephew, among my friends?"

He said this enquiringly, and De Vere felt embarrassed; but with a clearness in being true to himself, which will always unravel the most entangled embarrassment, saw at once the conduct he ought to pursue.

Fixing a steady eye, therefore, upon Lord Cleveland, he replied, " Forgive me if I answer you as solemnly as you have addressed me; and say, that if the confidence you are so good as to propose to me, will compromise any duty I may owe to another, or any feeling of my own, I request you not to proceed."

" Abrupt enough," said the Earl, with a disappointed, and rather a high air. " However, I will not be checked, by this seeming repulse, in my wish to engage an honourable man as my friend, and doing him good, if I can."

De Vere bowed with real thanks for his good will, but still cautioned him not to entrust any thing to him which it might be his duty not to conceal.

" I will run all risks," replied Lord Cleveland, " and if it make you my friend, they will be well run. But this is too open a place, and I request you to step into the cabinet which is allotted to me here for a dressing-room."

De Vere complied, and Cleveland then informed him, that should the present minister resign, as was expected, from ill health, he had himself been informed, that he was to be in part intrusted with the arrangement of a new

ministry, in which he supposed he could take what post he pleased for himself, as well as provide as he wished for others.

Seeing De Vere fixed in attention, he added that as his informer was only second to the sovereign himself, there could be no doubt about the fact, and that as such, he had been treated with by others. Two great alliances, he said, courted him; Lord Oldcastle's, (whence the hurried visit of his son,) and Mr. Wentworth's, whom he knew De Vere very much admired; that to close with both, he feared, was impossible; since, were he inclined to it, one would not bear an equal, nor the other a superior; that he was thus disappointed in his very finest schemes, as Lord Oldcastle carried most votes; while Mr. Wentworth was so highly gifted, and, from his eloquence, so powerful in the Commons, that to lose him would lose the greatest support on which he would rely.

With all he most wished, therefore, seemingly within his grasp, he saw nothing but constant battle and danger; and though on the eve of gratifying his fondest ambition, it only harassed him with fears and vexation. At the same time, if he must make an election, he

foresaw a more tranquil state of things by allying himself with Lord Oldcastle, in consequence of his great parliamentary strength, than with the other, who was almost a new man, and whose power, though great in debate, was comparatively little in votes.

Lord Cleveland was proceeding, when De Vere interrupted him.

"Excuse me," said he, "if I request you to go no farther. For while I feel that I am not of consequence enough to be the confidant of secrets so important, far less to be consulted, yet, as the very listening to them under the seal of secrecy might appear to enlist me in a party, a thing which I am desirous to avoid, I ought for my own sake to decline the honour you are doing me. It is otherwise too, only fair to inform you that my admiration of Mr. Wentworth is such, that were I disposed blindly to follow any person, it would be him; and I own myself concerned at what your lordship has let fall as to a determination not to act with him."

Lord Cleveland bit his lips almost through at this intimation. He found, what is perhaps the greatest mortification to a politician, that he had been betrayed by his wishes into a

breach of discretion. He had, in fact, allowed himself, by too much confidence in Lord Mowbray, to be hurried into disclosures of the most vital importance, before he had ascertained from his own observation that the party receiving them had been properly prepared. His other great passion, and his anxieties about all connected with the object of it, had indeed thrown him off his guard, and made him too prone to listen to Lord Mowbray's assurances about his nephew; but this did not excuse him in his own mind.

He took a turn across the room to recover his surprise, and only after a long pause was able to exclaim, "I find I have been egregiously misled, but I have at least a man of honour to deal with; and I thank you for having so early undeceived me."

"Undeceived you, my lord!"

"Not so much undeceived me, as cleared up a most gross mistake; and the best excuse I can make for my own want of caution is, that your uncle in terms assured me I might count upon him and all that belonged to him."

"My uncle is very good to me," replied De Vere, "but I did not know I belonged to him."

"This is most untoward," said Lord Cleve-

land, "and particularly in regard to other views which I had entertained (excuse me) about yourself. For it would be easy for me (though I might be opposed in it by Lord Oldcastle) to place you in a post, high for your youth, and worthy, I may say, of your character and talents; in fact, a post which it is the great object of Eustace to fill; which, indeed, he expects, and which his father at present makes a *sine qua non*."

This intimation was certainly not without its weight with De Vere; since ambition, though not very violently kindled, was far from being dead in him; and it had been even fostered and fanned by hopes of a softer kind, which have been sometimes thought incompatible with the passion, though it often supplies it with its daintiest food. For many a labour has been encountered, and many a life ventured, seemingly for the sake of power, or riches, or high degree, when power, riches, and high degree have all been only courted for a sweeter reward, the seducing sweetness of a woman's love.

Hence these words of Lord Cleveland were precisely the winged words to go deepest into De Vere's heart. Nevertheless, they were linked with so many jarring conditions, that he rose

above the temptation, powerful as it was, and so much more powerful than even Cleveland himself had thought it.

It is certain he faltered a little, till at length, thanking the Earl for his good will, he very frankly told him that nothing could be more agreeable to him than his proposal; but that even if he was yet prepared to embark in a party, merely on the authority of names, the ill grace, nay injustice, that would attend upon the preference of himself to Eustace, whose wishes had been thus made known and entertained, and who had agreed to make common cause with Lord Cleveland, would prevent him from profiting by his favourable intentions.

The refusal, and the old-fashioned reason given for it, here got the better of the practised Earl. He regarded De Vere with almost derision, and asked him if he really was such an old maid in politics, as to think, even, if the hopes given to Eustace had been precise and absolute, that they could stand in the way of a *necessary arrangement*.

'Twas a convenient phrase, (and many a man has found it so) to promote, or postpone, or finally withhold, whatever it was agreeable or

disagreeable to himself at the time, to promote, postpone, or withhold.

"Are you yet to learn," asked Lord Cleveland, "that in the management of a political party, *arrangement* is every thing, friendship nothing; nay, that the most determined friends must often give way to doubtful allies, to determined enemies, always?"

"I confess I am in that miserable state of ignorance," returned De Vere; "nor did I believe but that these corruptions of the good old school, like many other corruptions, had gone out of fashion."

"I congratulate you on your very virtuous *naïveté*," said Lord Cleveland.

"I have no doubt," returned De Vere, rising far superior to the Earl's irony, "that I expose my schoolboy ignorance to you, who are one of the great spirits formed to soar above us petty sciolists in politics; but even with this disgrace hanging over me, I venture to predict that Lord Eustace will not only think himself, but actually will *be* ill-treated, if promise is not kept to him; I, at least, as his friend, will never be the cause of breaking it."

"My good Mortimer," replied Cleveland,

changing his tone, "you cannot suppose that one who esteems this very integrity in you as I do, could wish you to depart from it. But without dishonour, you surely are not to be told that to make a *different arrangement*, or even a *postponement*, (which is all I meant,) is not the same as *breaking* a promise."

"Has then the arrangement you propose, been submitted to Eustace, and has he consented?" asked Mortimer.

"I have not even thought what the arrangement shall be," replied the Earl, "and of course he cannot at present have given his consent."

"Then neither ought I," replied De Vere; "even could I otherwise come up to your wishes. But I ought to release you from the task of thinking of me, since, as you have not even opened to me the great public principles on which you propose to found an administration, I have told you that I can come under no obligation to embark in its support. I have owned to you besides, that the principles as well as abilities of Mr. Wentworth have all my approbation, and I am still lost in wonder that you think it worth your while to compliment with such important communications, a person so utterly insignificant as myself."

"There are motives for everything," replied Cleveland, "and I have mine. I certainly wish you, for your own sake, not to fall into the imprudence of separating yourself from your uncle. But I own I have stronger wishes than you are aware of:—yes, far stronger than Lord Mowbray himself, or any of you, can divine." Here he walked the room in increasing agitation, till he added; "To be well with your uncle and all that belong to him, yourself amongst them, has become most essential to me."

Though De Vere did not understand the whole extent of this, he was too much alive to the feeling uppermost in his own heart, not to catch something like alarm at the emphasis with which it was said, and he asked its meaning with an anxiety which was but ill concealed.

The Earl immediately resumed his coolness, which indeed, seldom, if ever before had abandoned him for the *one* minute during which his agitation lasted; and coming up to De Vere, he rapt out with great feeling, though affecting to smile,

> "If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
> Where should he find it fairer than in Blanche?

If zealous love should go in search of virtue,
Where should he find it purer than in Blanche?
If love ambitious, sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound richer blood than Lady Blanche?"

He said this not only with feeling, but with that collected and gentlemanly air which often belonged to him; "It is foolish," cried he, "to attempt to disguise what I dare say is obvious to you, and what in effect no man but would be proud of. In short, I love your cousin, and what I thought no women of the world could ever have effected with me, she, with all her inexperience, has accomplished in a moment. I am come then to lay myself at her feet: I seek her as a wife, and would sacrifice the Treasury itself to make her Countess of Cleveland."

Though not wholly unprepared, De Vere turned pale at this annunciation, and at first had no reply; till with a broken voice he brought out, that he had no doubt Lady Constance would know full well how to appreciate the sacrifice.

Cleveland eyed him for some time in silence, when, recovering his firmness, De Vere added, "but what has produced *me* the honour of this confidence, when your Lordship has so many

more intimate friends than I, and when, if you seek one of the family to be the depository of your wishes, there is her father, so closely your ally in other affairs; to say nothing of Lady Constance herself, who seems the most natural person of all to receive the communication."

"What! before I even know how to approach her? Or would you have me attempt a storm, before a trench be opened? No! no! this might do for your young blood, or even for mine, were the fortress differently constructed; but as it is, shall I confess to you, De Vere, that I have no hope of success?—Nay! shall I confess——" and here, even this great man of the world felt overcome with despair, and the words struggled in his throat as he uttered them, "Yes! I will fairly own it, I do not think myself even deserving of success."

De Vere, with a thousand reasons for different feelings, was affected almost to pity at his emotion; for it was not in the character of that self disparagement which is assumed merely to obtain a compliment to vanity, but seemed the confession of a mind acquainted with its own withered state, and fully aware

that it was past the enjoyment it sought, (the most delicious under heaven could it be obtained,) a young affection and an unpractised heart.

Yes! a young affection, and an unpractised heart!

How much is expressed in those few little words! What wealth can purchase, what power command them?—What success in ambition can compensate their loss, or the misery of discovering that we never held them, when we fondly may have thought they had been devotedly ours?—Yet are they the simplest gifts of Nature; and while the favourite of a king, nay, even a king himself, may sigh for them in vain, the youth just starting into life, and embarrassed perhaps how to live, may clasp them in his arms, and laugh at fortune.*

Strange as it may appear, these were the reflections even of a Cleveland, when, revolving

* We said a king himself, and we thought of Henry VIII. There never was a more detestable tyrant; yet after a courtship with the wife of his love, Ann Bullen, which has the air and charm of a romance, we almost pity even that butcher, to think he was so far deceived that, by her own confession, he never really had had her heart.

his mighty resources, he had asked himself, almost with passion, why he was not happy? and in such moments he has envied that married life which it was generally the object of his bitterest wit to deride.

He was now, however, fully committed; and, with a feeling more consonant to nature and nearer to virtue than he had perhaps ever before experienced, he went on with his confessions, and to De Vere's consternation, as well as astonishment, threw himself upon him for assistance and advice, in a matter in which every pulse of De Vere's own heart was interested to oppose him.

Luckily the task of deciding how to act, though delicate and difficult, required no contest of adverse feelings. Lord Cleveland had never had too much of his respect, and he felt an auxiliary to his firmness on this occasion, in discovering that the friendly offers to his ambition which had just been made, had not been made without design.

Still the emotion which Cleveland showed was at least a sincere one, and the confessions to which so proud and pampered a spirit had condescended, savoured of something like generosity. A gentleman's demand had been made

upon De Vere, and in the spirit of a gentleman he resolved to answer it.

When we say this, let us not be misunderstood. By a gentleman, we mean not to draw a line that would be invidious between high and low; rank and subordination; riches and poverty. The distinction is in the mind. Whoever is open, loyal, and true; whoever is of humane and affable demeanour; whoever is honourable in himself, and in his judgment of others, and requires no law but his word to make him fulfil an engagement;—such a man is a gentleman;—and such a man may be found among the tillers of the earth. But high birth and distinction, for the most part insure the high sentiment which is denied to poverty and the lower professions. It is hence, and hence only, that the Great claim their superiority; and hence, what has been so beautifully said of honour, the law of Kings, is no more than true.

> "It aids and strengthens Virtue where it meets her,
> And imitates her actions where she is not."

But De Vere's honour was no imitation of any thing; and, applied to as he had been by Cleveland, though on the tenderest point, he

dealt with him in the very simplicity of truth. He told him, that with a rank and possessions so resplendent, with the evident goodwill of her father, with nobody to compare with him in those points as a suitor, it must be far other causes, if any, that should make him hesitate to address Lady Constance.

"Know you any of these other causes?" asked the Earl, with vehemence.

It was a hard question.

"To say I *know* them," replied De Vere, "would be a presumption of which I will not be guilty."

"But you may suspect," answered Cleveland. "You have seen much of your cousin; and, I ask, *do* you suspect them?"

"My dear Lord Cleveland," returned De Vere, "suspicion is a dangerous thing to tamper with. I have told you, I know not my cousin's mind upon a question which it would be indelicate to her to suppose, without more reason than you have given her, that she has even herself considered."

"That is but true," observed Cleveland; "although she could not well mistake my attentions to her in town. But I fear I may have been misrepresented to her, and it is here I

most stand in need of your assistance. Will you undertake to serve me in this point, and ascertain, if possible, whether my fears are true?"

"Not for the world!"

"And why?"

"Let your own sense of honour answer. What! to be a spy over an unwary, unpractised girl! to watch and report upon her unguarded moments, uttering, perhaps, what she may not really think! Forbid it delicacy! Forbid it duty! duty to her, and even to you!"

"To me?"

"Yes! for should I form what I might think a well-founded opinion, adverse to your hopes, how would you yourself thank me, when, on actually making known your suit, you might find a different result?—But it is ridiculous for the experienced Lord Cleveland to come to so unfit a person for advice."

"Alas! I have no experience," interrupted the Earl.

"What! the Richelieu of England!" cried Mortimer, "and no experience!"

"Mock me not, De Vere. It is a day of con-

fessions, and I will own another truth to you—I have experience in women, but not in woman; I have seen a thousand coquettes, but only one Lady Constance. When in town, I thought to take her by storm, but I found my mistake. Young as she was, she awed me into constraint, and with all my practice, I understood not how to treat her. In short,

> "My grosser sense knew not the high respect,
> The almost worship, and deep reverence,
> Beauty and virgin modesty command."

The ingenuousness of this speech moved De Vere.

"This would go farther," said he, "to win a woman than any thing I have heard;" but he instantly checked himself. In truth, there was a struggle between pride and affection in Cleveland, which he had never felt before, which made him condescend almost to humiliation, and left Mortimer with no doubt of his real attachment. How far such humiliation from a man so richly endowed with the world's gifts, and by no means a beggar in the endowments of mind, might not win his way at last, with so young a creature as Constance, was a question

which made De Vere tremble. He was eager, therefore, to break off a conference in which he might be led cruelly to commit himself; and as the morning was advancing, he prepared to depart.

"I beseech you do not leave me," said Cleveland; "I have perhaps exposed myself to you in the picture I have given of the two great passions that sway me. Yet there is not another man on earth to whom I would have opened such a confidence. I will now be weak enough to confess to you my real motives, despise them as you may——". A flash of indignation, however, came here across him, and he added, with some defiance of look, "No! that cannot be, for no living being shall ever say he has despised the Earl of Cleveland!"

"For God's sake, my Lord," returned De Vere, "recover yourself. It is impossible you can apply these words to me."

"No! De Vere," replied the Earl, "I do not. Yet I feel some compunction in being about to disclose what I know to be any thing but true greatness of mind. In a word, though I might bear to relinquish the pursuit of Lady Constance of my own free will, I could not,

no! I could not bear to make an offer and be refused. Hence, and hence chiefly, I asked your assistance. This you have declined giving me, for what real reason I know not; but there are strong, though but natural reports of yourself, and this is one other motive for addressing you. In a word, one cause of your distance may be founded in the truth of what I have heard—you are yourself a lover!"

De Vere was certainly much disconcerted at this attack, and had not a fit of pride at being so catechised, come to his aid, he would have felt more awkwardness than he did. But Cleveland, perceiving the ancient feelings of the Mowbrays and De Veres flashing on his cheek and gathering on his brow, did all he could to soften an intimation which he feared had been too abrupt.

"I beseech you," said the Earl, "pardon a liberty which I cannot justify, and which anxiety and unbearable uncertainty have alone caused. I am ashamed of the freedom I have taken, and the unwarrantable trial to which I have exposed you."

Half propitiated, De Vere, though he did not accept the hand which the agitated Earl pre-

sented to him, would not or could not prevent his laying it conciliatingly on his shoulder as he said these words:—

"I see," said Cleveland, "it is not for me to ask your confidence on this burning subject; and it is equally useless to regret the trouble I have given in forcing my own upon you.—Forced it I evidently have, and perhaps I may think I have discovered that which may usefully influence me in directing my own conduct. All I will venture to hope, and what indeed I exact from your honour is, that a syllable of this conference may not be breathed to your cousin, even should you be on terms, through your own or Lady Eleanor's credit, to inform her."

"I am no informer," replied De Vere with some distance of manner; "at the same time it is but right to point out to you, that these communications having not been sought, but rather deprecated by me, I am master of my conduct concerning them. I beg also most pointedly to remark, that however your lordship may please to impute feelings or views to me, in regard to Lady Constance, no syllable that I have breathed can warrant the conclusions you have drawn. It is at your own

peril therefore that you act upon them, if peril there be."

"I understand you," returned Cleveland, attempting to resume his gay and disembarrassed air; "and, perhaps after all, I may not feel seriously enough in love to proceed with my design. I shall be guided by the changes and chances I may observe; and indeed the state of politics I have opened to you, (trepanned into so doing by that Solomon, Lord Mowbray,) would at any rate materially interfere with the prosecution of my views; for as you see, I am here to-day and may be gone to-morrow. However, I allow," (and here all his sarcastic tone returned to him,) "you steady old fellows, who are above love and ambition, have the best of it. It is only for such youngsters as Eustace and me, who have our fortunes to make, to watch the changes of the world."

So saying, with a mixture of picque and gaiety he rang for his Frenchman, and with a forced indifference of manner, said he must prepare for a riding party which had been projected soon after breakfast.

The pride of De Vere was excited, and he took his leave with some stiffness, which Cleve-

land returned with his very loftiest manner; and throwing himself into a chair, exhibited a copy of the physiognomy attributed to the dæmon of pride himself,

"Thrice changed with pale, ire, envy, and despair."

CHAPTER II.

A BIRTHDAY.

What a sweep of vanity comes this way !
SHAKSPEARE.

WHERE a man has been taught to school his features by long habits of dissimulation, whether practised in court or country, it is not easy to detect even the stronger passions, by what is passing on the surface. We pretend not to enter into the deep and interesting question, (of no little consequence to human nature,) on the preference to be given to that prudence which can always dissemble our feelings, or that silly openness (as very prudent people like to call it,) which makes it impossible to hide a strong and sincere emotion. Those who wish to see the superiority of dissembling over openness demonstrated with admirable force, may consult the philosopher of flattery

and dissimulation, Chesterfield; and if they wish to contemplate it in practice, they may look at Clayton.

It is very certain, that in point of meritorious force of mind and heroic command of one's self, the dissembler carries it hollow; and these superiorities all belonged to Lord Cleveland over De Vere, when both issued forth to join the riding party for which we left the former preparing at the end of the last chapter. For though, when he threw himself into his chair, after his conversation with Mortimer, we compared Lord Cleveland to something very like the Prince of Darkness, it is certain he appeared on the Esplanade, under the Castle Terrace, (where the company mounted their horses and carriages,) with all the ease and nonchalance of a person who had no secret care gnawing at his heart. Within a few minutes' interval, he had no eye but for his mistress, no wish but for pleasure. On the other hand De Vere, who was an unwilling member of the party, without having felt half Cleveland's violence of emotion during the conversation, was sufficiently moved with it to be unable to repress his reflections. He was thoughtful, unobservant, and abstracted.

Thus the one, to beguile the time looked like the time, while the face of the other was

> "As a book, where men
> May read strange matters."

Every thing indeed, seemed joyous but himself, and Lord Cleveland most joyous of all. Clayton, to be sure, had not yet relaxed his brow, which had been knit from the moment of Cleveland's arrival. But he sought not De Vere as his companion, though he always met him with the usual smile. He had more interest in endeavouring to sound Eustace, to whom, from the hints he had gathered of high impending changes, he resolved to lay close siege. He so far succeeded as to seduce that eager young person into a separate discussion on the state of parties; a point which he found the more easy, because in fact, Eustace was not able to think of any thing else.

De Vere, indeed, aided his cousin to mount her beautiful palfrey, which she did, and managed it with the air of a Diana; but having seen her seated, he chose for himself the office of driving the Marchioness and Lady Eleanor in an open landau. So that, except when her fa-

ther, whom she had summoned as her chaperon, shared her conversation, which he was not very eager to do, Lord Cleveland was blessed with Constance all to himself.

And a blessing he would have thought it, had she not been seized with that pensiveness which we have described as belonging to her on many occasions, and from which, on the present, the practised Cleveland knew not whether to predict good or evil. For though her charming vivacity might have delighted him more, yet he was well enough versed in woman's demeanour, to know that perfect ease, before a suspected or declared lover, showed too much of perfect indifference; and he has been known to say, when he had designs upon a woman's heart, that he preferred an appearance of downright hatred, as more capable of being influenced to what he wished, than such an indifference. He was, therefore, not absolutely in despair, when he found his fair companion rather constrained, disposed to be silent, and even to reverie, during the ride, notwithstanding all his endeavours, seconded by the plentiful encouragement of Lord Mowbray, to make himself agreeable to her. Once indeed he seemed entirely to succeed; but whether this was a good

or bad omen, he could not exactly decide; for it was when, falling in with Lord Mowbray's prognostics of his soon arriving at great power in the government, he observed, that could such a notion be more than flattery, the only thing that would make it agreeable, would be the opportunity it would give of bringing forward his friends with him, and eminently so noble a fellow as De Vere. The countenance of Constance was instantly lighted up with pleasure, and for not less than five minutes, she was more gracious to him than ever she had been before; though, the conversation changing, she again fell into thoughtfulness, only interrupted by occasional stoppages at particular prospects, where they joined the landau. Here De Vere was unmercifully rallied by the Earl, on his want of gallantry, if not his laziness, in preferring driving to riding; to all which he seemed to submit with most resigned acquiescence.

On the whole, to none of the party, except perhaps the Marchioness, did this little sally seem to give entire satisfaction: for the Marchioness knew nothing of the interests passing in the hearts of any of them, and being of a buoyant cheerful disposition herself, it required palpable reasons at least, to make her suspect

uneasiness in others. She assented, however, to Lady Constance's desire that they should return home rather sooner than they intended, in order to receive the arrivals which might be expected at the Castle; from which the Marchioness hoped, and told her inexperienced pupil to hope, much food for observation.

Upon their return, therefore, they all took their station upon the terrace, along which the state rooms of the Castle opened, and which was accessible at one end by a flight of stone steps. At the bottom of these, the visitors who approached that way without driving into the great court-yard, alighted from their carriages. The steps of the terrace were lined by a double row of orange trees and citrons, which now, in full fruit, extended themselves to the door of the guard-room, where the lady of the castle stood with her relations, to receive her guests.

In truth it was a goodly sight to see the gay company ascending in groups, and moving through odoriferous shrubs and flowers, till they arrived at the most beautiful flower of all, the youthful Constance, to whom having paid their compliments, ceremony ceased, and all was ease.

It wanted an hour to dinner, and half an hour to dressing-time; and this odd half hour was

dedicated to the reception of such guests as, coming from town, or a great distance, were to sleep at the Castle, and dress for dinner. Some of these (as no introduction was expected before dinner-time) remained below; others sought their noble hosts.

Among these, the earliest arrived, (she never failed of being in time,) was a Mrs. Oldbury, the whimsical wife of a neighbouring and reverend gentleman, who, from being bookish and indolent, preferred residing in his prebendal house at Lichfield, to either their own mansion-house on his own estate, or a town life. Mrs. Oldbury, therefore, was one of those amiable little aristocrats of a cathedral town, to whom we formerly alluded, as being most exact in enforcing the line of separation between the provincial beau monde of the Close, and the vulgar thriving people composing the trading part of the city. Her husband was a high Tory, and as firm a political supporter of Lord Mowbray as his disposition would let him; he was, however, too indolent or too shy to attend his public days.

"Seldom at *fête*, 'twas such a busy life,
But duly sent his family and wife."

We have called Mrs. Oldbury whimsical, and surely she was so; for, being really as we have described her, a woman of respectable rank and consequence, who might have received as a right those attentions from the great and fashionable which really well-bred people never refuse where they are merited, she seemed to prefer suing for them as an alms, by a pertinacity of humiliation and a too obvious flattery, to which a mere dependant would hardly have submitted. She watched the eye of a person of fashion, with a sort of feline anxiety, and calculated the exact advances or retrogrades in favour which she made, or thought she had made, with those who really were, or assumed to be, higher bred than herself.

But a very high-looking personage was presently seen mounting the steps of the terrace, much entangled with his travelling pelisse, which, to Lord Cleveland's horror, he found to be the counterpart of his own. Colour, pattern, wadding, and above all, the braided Brandenburgs, were precisely the same; only there having been a hot sun, the house-party rather wondered at its having been worn. Mr. Freshville, the new arrival, declared, however,

it had been very cold, and he was glad to put it on.

"But how the devil did you come by it?" said the Earl, giving him a finger, rather than a hand; "I thought mine had been the only one in England, and it came from Paris but three or four days ago."

"Exactly the time of mine," answered Freshville; mincing his words, but with an assumption of dignity.

The Earl looked displeased, and said he had already found it such an ugly affair that he had resolved to give it immediately to his valet. "It may, however, keep *you* warm enough," added Lord Cleveland.

Both Constance and her aunt marked this little piece of insolence, but to their surprise, the Marchioness, who with all her rectitude, as it has been hinted, loved a little badinage, where she thought it fair to indulge it, was most diverted with the solemnity of astonishment with which Freshville received it. In fact Mr. Freshville's pride was cruelly affronted as he bowed his thanks for this speech, which was more mortifying than it seemed: for Freshville, a new man, though of fortune, had made

his way into most of the fashionable classes, only by the studied stiffness of his manners. It was not that this was exactly the disposition of his nature; but having resolved to be fashionable, he had viewed the different roads to that enviable lot, and finding all others preoccupied, had pitched upon a well-pursued, though artificial, fastidiousness, as the best means of success. All his deportment therefore was serious; he seemed to be governed by rule and line; his looks, manner, voice, and speech were wrapped up in a gravity worthy a Spaniard. His dress was always most fashionably exact; he took snuff with peculiar grace; and his bow was as if from the height of elevation. The speech of the Earl, therefore, was a blow to him, and a severer one than at first appeared. For whether from his want of pedigree, or want of genius in the walk of ambition he had chosen, he still was at a great distance from the enviable point of supreme bon ton; a distinction higher than mere fashion, of which all, even of the fashionable, are not always aware.

But Freshville, unlike many other coxcombs, had made this discovery; and, as a remedy, he thought, that being admitted to the

companionship of the Earl of Cleveland, he could not do better than become the double of that illustrious person. Accordingly, he copied him at least in the fastidious part of his manner, it not being convenient to imitate his agrémens; and not only in London, but even in Paris, he employed the same tailor. On the present occasion, therefore, the French operator had only (according to a general order when any thing particularly rich or new had been commissioned by Cleveland) obeyed his instructions; and hence the travelling pelisse.

Lord Cleveland, however, soon resumed his good humour; for in fact Freshville was his devoted follower in politics, and not only gave him his own vote in parliament, but often aided him in elections,—all which was cheaply repaid by Cleveland, though sometimes in a manner unpalatable to his pride, by suffering his *political*, to give himself the airs of a *fashionable* friend.

"I have just received a letter from him," said Freshville one day, on the eve of a ball which Cleveland was about to give at Richmond. "I wanted to go to Paris, but he says he must have me: indeed, I know he cannot do without me. This is a little unreasonable; but

it is a debt of friendship, and I suppose I must pay it; still, it is really a great bore."

The sufferance of such language by the Earl, secured Freshville's vote upon every question during the whole of that session.

A landau now drove up, from which landed a gay bevy of a mother and daughters, who challenged all eyes. These were the females of a family nothing less than Right Honourable. Mr. Partridge, the father, had advanced through a long political life to his dignity of a Privy Counsellor; which, in truth, was enjoyed much more by his wife and daughters, than himself; for it had been bestowed upon him, by way of (not letting him down, but) gently pushing him *out* of an appointment of value.

The lady of this gentleman, had the *misfortune* (as Harclai once shocked her by saying,) to be the daughter of an Irish earl, though nowise connected with Ireland. He called it a *misfortune*, pretty much upon the principle of the Lady Lydia Loller, of Addison, whose chief reason for desiring to be sent to the infirmary for bad temper was, that she had the *misfortune* to be a lady of quality married to a commoner. It is

very certain, that the inequality of birth and connexions, to say nothing of dispositions, between Mr. Partridge and his lady, occasioned some little mortification to the latter, and a great deal to her daughters: as they, through their mother, looked to be considered among the first ranks of fashion; while, through their father, they were reduced to fear (for they did not confess it even to themselves) that they might be thought a little too plebeian. This must account for the extreme jealousy which both mother and daughters showed, lest their pretensions should be called in question; and, in particular, for a sort of studied and contemptuous distance, at which they all agreed in keeping persons either on a level with their father's family, or any way approaching to rivalry with themselves.

Both Mr. and Lady Elizabeth Partridge were the great allies of Lord Mowbray, who had more than once entreated their assistance in doing the honours of his castle parties, and putting the natives (as Lady Elizabeth called them) into good humour with his lordship.

As, however, her ladyship, and still more her daughters, were really of extremely high monde, and the higher, from being reduced

sometimes (for the reasons above stated) to fear it might be disputed, this was a favour not absolutely conferred without sacrifice. Lady Elizabeth, who had points to carry with Lord Mowbray, and was moreover his relation, consented to it with tolerable grace; but her daughters were by no means so complying. For though they liked the castle parties sufficiently, it was, perhaps, more because they there felt themselves to be members of a privileged few, who could indulge in the exaction of almost divine honours from the many, than because they felt under any obligation to submit their cloth of gold to the cloth of frise of country families. The political considerations which led to it, they were too young to understand, or to care for them if they did. Their mother had indeed given them very proper lectures upon this subject, which they heard with about as much attention, as they heard all other lectures, to which in the course of their education they had been obliged to listen.

This party had now begun to ascend the terrace steps, and Lady Elizabeth passed through the lane made for her at bottom, bowing to those of her acquaintance whom she recognized,

with distant condescension, till she reached the high personages who waited for her at top. Her daughters (two in number) followed her, with a most assured air, seeming to think that several persons who saluted them as they passed, were mere statues, whom it was not in the smallest degree incumbent upon them to notice.

They were in a very fashionable *deshabille de voyage*, consisting of loose travelling gowns of scarlet, well trimmed and flounced, and clasped with gold. The face of one at least was blooming, and the figures of both tall and striking; of all which advantages they seemed to be fully sensible. There was, however, a difference between them. For, while Miss Zephyrina, the youngest, was sweet seventeen, the eldest, Miss Partridge was at that uneasy (we had almost said unhappy) age, when the world pronounces a lady's girlhood to be gone, and the patient is not disposed to agree in the decision. What that age is, we dare not say; for it is different in different subjects, and every one must apply it for herself. "*Il n'y a qu'un printems dans l'année*," says an old French proverb—and Miss Partridge thought so too; but then she also thought that the *printems* lasted longer with her than it did with any body else. In short,

that bloom and alacrity of spirit, which render a young girl so charming to herself and others, had left her; and she had not (yet) acquired those other graces, from sense and manner, which, by making a woman more estimable, cause her to be infinitely more attracting.

Nothing pleased the elder Miss Partridge so much as when she was classed with her sister, under the name of "the girls." She was fond of telling stories wherein her father would say, "Come along, *girls*;" or talk of his *girls*, and she was even once known to be civil for ten minutes to a man she had determined to cut, because she heard he had spoken of her as a "charming *girl*."

These sisters advanced with a quick step, laughing loudly with one another, and staring through their glasses at the persons who made way for them, to the right and left.

De Vere, who met their view, was honoured with most radiant smiles; while, as to Harclai, who was standing by him, and perfectly well known to them, they almost laughed in his face. But the attraction of the great magnet, the family party above, increasing (like other attraction) in increased proportion as they ap-

proached, they were at last drawn into its focus with irresistible velocity.

But, horrible to relate! Mrs. Oldbury, whom they had settled in their way down not to speak to, was almost close to them; though having watched long, and in vain, for their eyes, which were somehow or another always averted, she was forced to console herself as well as she could, by talking to her neighbour, the unpretending and happier wife of the clergyman of Mowbray.

In time, however, and by dint of most pertinacious endeavours, Mrs. Oldbury succeeded so far as to nestle close to the objects of her envy and admiration, and deprived them of all pretext to avoid returning a part, at least, of the very low curtesy she made them. But having now advanced with an absolute threat of conversation, these daughters of fashion and ill-breeding looked at their watches, and declaring they had not a minute to lose, scudded away to their room to dress; leaving Mrs. Oldbury in possession of mamma.

Lady Elizabeth, to do her justice, carried off the misfortune with fortitude; and knowing that Lord Mowbray had reason for courting

the Oldburys in the country, as well as that Mr. Partridge had reasons for courting Lord Mowbray in town, she deigned to speak several sentences to Mrs. Oldbury, one of which actually was, " Is that pretty looking young woman with you, your niece ?"

Mrs. Oldbury was charmed; and beckoning her niece, she was presented to Lady Elizabeth in all due form. Nor did the high town lady leave it, even here; for looking at Miss Oldbury with the utmost force of condescending protection, she added, " I hear you are very accomplished, and play, sing, and dance, as if you had never been out of London."

Miss Oldbury blushed, and made a modest retreat behind her aunt, who almost bent double with acknowledgment; when Lady Elizabeth, sidling off to Lord Mowbray, whispered him, loud enough to be heard by Lady Eleanor and Constance, and all but loud enough for Mrs. Oldbury herself, " There, my Lord, you surely owe me something for that. I think I have complied with your wishes to a tittle."

" Constance," said Lady Eleanor, as she took her arm and retired to dress, " I do not like this lady, and still less her daughters. Your

modest friend Euphemia Oldbury, whom she frightened away by her stare, is worth all of them put together."

"Including Mrs. Oldbury herself," added Constance.

"You may well say so," replied Lady Eleanor, "nor can I pity the mortifications of an ambition so silly."

"I begin to hate ambition of all kinds," said Constance, as they entered her dressing-room.

"Where it takes such wrong turns it is despicable," replied Lady Eleanor. "This Mrs. Oldbury is my absolute wonder. How respectable might she make her station, if she did not travel out of it; and how independent ought she to be of these vulgar people of fashion, who affect to despise her. Does Mortimer know these Partridges? they are to me quite new people, and I shall be curious to know what he thinks of them."

"I am mistaken if they are of his sort," said Constance.

"He would like Euphemia better," observed her aunt; "but for—but I must really hasten to dress."

"But for what?" asked Constance with quickness, and following her to the door.

"Only her silly aunt," added Lady Eleanor, and retired.

"Euphemia is a nice and modest girl," said Constance, seating herself in an arm-chair, and beginning her toilette.

"She is also very pretty," continued she, throwing off her cap, and looking at her own features rather more minutely than usual. She would have gone on; but her woman coming in, the soliloquy ended.

What it would have been but for the interruption, even if we knew, we have no right to tell; but it is certain Miss Melitot never knew her lady so difficult to please as that day in dressing. In particular several new ornaments for her hair, which had just arrived from town, including an aigrette of great beauty, a birthday gift of her father, were displayed in triumph by Miss Melitot. All were tried, but all ordered back again into their cases. She made the same experiment on other ornaments, with the same success. Miss Melitot feared she was ill, and trembled for the event on such a day as a birth-day. At length a half-blown rose, plucked by her own hand that morning in the dairy garden, was chosen as the sole and simple ornament of her head. This, and a white mus-

lin dress, with a string of pearls round the neck, was all the attire she selected for this her inaugural exhibition as lady of the castle, upon her birth-day fête.

To say the truth, most were surprised at it when she entered the gallery where the guests were now numerously assembled; and who, from their own *recherche*, seemed to have expected a different appearance. Lady Elizabeth and her daughters, in particular, approached her in a sort of wonder, which they did not conceal.

Lord Cleveland, however, observed that nothing could be more strictly correct, as it was the known custom at Court, for the person whose nativity was celebrated to be plainly attired, while the guests were as superb as dress could make them. To this Mrs. Oldbury, who was standing near, not only assented, but observed Lady Constance was always right; an observation which drew a titter from the Misses Partridge; aside indeed, but not so soft as to escape observation, or prevent considerable mortification to the subject of it.

These conspicuous young ladies were indeed anything but studious of what the more humdrum people, at that period, looked for in young persons, and called, in very primitive

language, the proprieties of life; which said proprieties were surely never intended for ladies of consequence, when they had the misfortune to be cast away upon the society of persons greatly their inferiors.

Connexion with the Castle family, far from imposing upon them that vulgar restraint of civility to her guests which Lady Constance might have expected, only conferred upon them additional privileges, in marking more distinctly that line of separation between fashionable and unfashionable, which the latter so aspiringly struggle to pass, the former to render impassable. While, therefore, Constance, on the arm of her father, moved through the throng, in order to be presented to her country neighbours, a ceremony which she went through with exquisite grace, the Misses Partridge crowded round the Marchioness and Lady Eleanor; and with the still more powerful support of the two noble Lords, and Freshville, and Clayton, formed a coterie which was considered by Mrs. Oldbury and others of her class, as the Garden of Eden, which they all would have rejoiced to enter, had it not been guarded by the flaming sword

of Exclusiveness, which precluded even the attempt.

Harclai, however, had more courage, and, presuming upon a very old acquaintance with Mr. Partridge, (we will not absolutely acquit him of malignity in the adventure,) broke without ceremony into the circle, and with not very welcome familiarity, enquired of Lady Elizabeth after the health of her husband :—possibly this might have been borne, but he added with sufficient abruptness to be more than very disagreeable :—

"I was sorry to hear he had lost that fine appointment he had. I suppose he considers the Privy Council as a sort of kick up stairs."

The provoking coolness, and possibly designed coarseness of this speech, were heightened by his taking out his snuff-box and feeding his nostrils with a most determined air of remaining where he was.

Another gentleman now approached the forbidden circle, who occasioned still greater dismay, not only to the Partridge family, but to some of the male wizards who defended it. This was Sir Bertie Brewster, another *ambitieux*, whom Le Sage has described as one of

those *bons roturiers* whom the king converts into a "*mauvais gentilhomme, par d'excellentes lettres de noblesse.*" And yet, if originality of design and perseverance in pursuing it, can entitle a man to the praise of genius, he was one of the most considerable geniuses of the age.

This gentleman, being the son of a great manufacturer of that day, was, for his sins, smitten with the love of great people, and the court. How to get among them was a question which might have puzzled a less aspiring man than himself: however, his father being dead, his first step was to dispose of all his commercial concerns; his next, to whitewash himself as well as he could by a title. He tried in vain for a baronetcy, but luckily being made sheriff of the county, where, among the potteries, he had an estate, he succeeded for a knighthood. It was going up with an address that first kindled his love for the Court, which he worshipped afterwards like an idol. No levée, or drawing-room scarcely ever took place without seeing him, sometimes in embroidery, sometimes in his militia coat, surrounded by persons of superior rank, not one of whom he knew, much less dared speak to.

Here, however, he had a resource which we confess was original, and bespoke that felicitous

genius on which we have so deservedly complimented him. For he fell upon the happy expedient of engaging in a sort of make-believe acquaintance, by inducing people to suppose that he saw friends at a distance whom he did not see, and received bows which he did not receive. With these, therefore, he pretended to engage in an interchange of nods and smiles; nay, a "How do you do, my Lord?" has frequently been heard to escape him in a low voice, as if he could not prevent it, though the noble addressee was (luckily for Sir Bertie) so far off that he knew he could not hear him.

But there was another still finer trait in his history, which made us both call and think him a man of genius: we mean the manner in which he acquired the aristocratic Christian name of Bertie, by which he was latterly known. We say *latterly*, because (believe it who will) the name given him by his plain and primitive godfathers, was the plain and primitive one of Bartholomew; of which growing ashamed, somewhere about his seven-and-twentieth year, he actually applied to the bishop of the diocese to know whether it might not be changed, and was mortified to be told that no power in Christendom could effect it. He therefore made a

virtue of necessity, and remembering that in his extreme youth, the long, old, scriptural Bartholomew had been, *per syncopen*, shortened into Barty; the transition from that to the noble name of Bertie was so easy, that he contrived not only to call himself, but to make his friends designate him also, by that high-sounding appellation. He was even knighted by it by the sovereign, and was so recorded in the Heralds' College when the fees came to be paid: and thus originally vamped up, he was now universally known by the name of Sir Bertie Brewster.

Upon the whole, this personage reaped some of the benefit which surely his genius and perseverance deserved; for, by dint of his regular appearances at Court, he at least got his name enrolled in those high lists of fame—the lists of the persons who frequented the drawing-room. He even obtained a bowing acquaintance with two or three old lords, one of them absolutely of the bedchamber, and once had the glory of being serviceable even to the Partridge family themselves. This happened when their coach broke down in drawing up to the gate of the palace, when, alas! no acquaintance was at hand, and it was impossible to get chairs for so many. To complete the ill-luck it rained hard, and the crowd prevent-

ed their making their way back. In this emergency, their ill (and Sir Bertie's good) star ordained, that his own fine roomy coach stopt the way. It was impossible not to offer it, and scarcely possible not to accept it, and Lady Elizabeth and two of her daughters were that day conveyed to Berkeley-square in the carriage of Sir Bertie Brewster.

We may be sure, a circumstance so joyful did not fail to be blazoned to the world. It appeared in the finest colours of a Court Circular, in all the papers of the next day. What was worse, the incident produced a call of enquiry; cards were left, which Mr. Partridge was forced to return; and, worst of all, Lady Elizabeth was obliged by her husband to send an invitation for her earliest rout, (it was, luckily, when few people were in town,) which Sir Bertie joyfully and thankfully came fifty miles from the country on purpose to attend. 'Tis very true that none of the Misses Partridge spoke a word to him, Mr. Partridge very little, and Lady Elizabeth less. But he went early; stayed to the very last; and made himself familiar with the face, air, and dress, of one or two persons of fashion, who happened at the time to be in London.

Such was the redoubtable person who now approached the females of the house of Partridge, and (to their horror,) with all the ease and intimacy of an old acquaintance.

The young ladies had no resource but to turn their backs upon him, which they did as suddenly, and with as much precision, as a rank of soldiers ordered to face about; so that Lady Elizabeth was forced to bear the brunt of the attack, as she had just sustained that of Harclai.

Lord Cleveland, who, though he allowed *all* her pretensions to be a woman of quality, knew also, and secretly laughed at her finery, was inwardly amused. In fact, dismay and anger clouded her brow, turning by degrees to scorn itself, when Sir Bertie, with the familiar tone of an old friend, asked her how she did; how long she had been in the country; and reminded the young ladies of the happy evening he had once past in Berkeley-square.

"I have no hesitation," observed he, "in saying it was by far the most elegant party in London during the season."

Nothing could exceed the contemptuous and scarcely suppressed laugh which he received in return for this sally; but the mortification was repaid more than a hundred-fold, when, to the

astonishment of the whole party, Lord Cleveland, to whom the knight now bowed, not only returned the salute, but entered into conversation with him. But there are motives for every thing. It was necessary for the Earl, in his political views upon a certain borough, to become possessed of a particular property, which Sir Bertie Brewster had held out hopes of transferring to him, upon terms so marvellously reasonable that no one believed the Knight to be in his senses, except those who computed the price which he put upon the Earl's recognition at court, or in parties like the present; and this price, with all his pride, the great Earl submitted to pay.

Constance, who had now finished the tour of her guests in the gallery, all of whom she had conciliated by her unaffected politeness, now returned to the upper end, attended by the Marquess of Clanellan, and our old friend, Dr. Herbert, who had just arrived together, in order to pay their tribute of respect to her birth-day. She was followed by several other new arrivals, both with and without titles, when the entrance of the house-steward announced that dinner was served. All crowded, of course, towards the banquetting-room; and, in doing so, a rather loud, and cer-

tainly an eager struggle was made by the Partridges, not to lose caste; for Lady Stanley, a county lady, knowing no better, having, as in mere course, offered to follow Lady Elizabeth, something was heard from the young ladies about Earl's grand-daughters; upon which Lady Stanley, who had a great deal of modesty and very little pride, and was, moreover, frightened by Sir Bertie, who said, in an authoritative voice, the thing was clear, immediately drew back.

Sir Bertie indeed looked for high reward for this assistance; for he aspired to no less than the arm of Miss Zephyrina Partridge herself—an offer which was indignantly refused. But the consequence was, not only that she proceeded alone, but had to encounter a ghastly smile from Harclai, who stood by the door, enjoying all the little manœuvres which he there witnessed, in all the thousand disguises of heart and character in which poor human nature thinks to shroud itself, and which Harclai was always so delighted to unveil. Indeed, he has been known to say, that for an acute moralist, the exits and entrances of a drawing-room were as good a touchstone as any that could be devised to develope character; the acting, though ge-

nuine, being so suddenly called for, that it was there most easily penetrated.

Without agreeing with him entirely in this, it is certain we have sometimes thought when we have seen a lady depositing her shawl or cloak on the banister of a staircase, previous to entering a brilliant saloon, that she there deposited her real character along with it, till she came out again.

CHAPTER III.

THE FÊTE.

None here he hopes
In all this noble bevy, has brought with her
One care abroad.

SHAKSPEARE.

All were at last seated; Lord Mowbray in the centre of his ample board; the Marchioness to his right; Lady Elizabeth to his left; next to her, as having been her conductor, Dr. Herbert, whom De Vere, with more disposition, it must be owned, to silent observation than personal exertion, was pleased to have for his right hand neighbour. Lady Constance was opposite to her father, supported by the Marquess and Lord Cleveland; and both the Partridges were gratified by getting Sir Melmoth Strickland, a young baronet just come to his fortune, between them. Clayton, as aid-de-camp, took one end of the table; and Eustace, who might have pretended to any place, or any companion, absorbed by far other thoughts, made an at-

tempt to seat himself next to him, being sure of at least such subjects as engrossed them both; but being summoned higher up by Lord Mowbray, he, not over willingly, took a vacant chair next, and below Miss Zephyrina Partridge. That young lady was delighted, but not less than the fortunate Sir Bertie, whose good genius having brought him into the neighbourhood precisely in the moment, seized upon a place between Lord Eustace and Harclai.

Clayton was a little mortified at losing his noble companion; but luckily perceiving the town clerk of the borough he represented, who always attended these meetings, he beckoned him to his side, and pampering him with the nicest morsels and choicest wines, made up for his own banishment from the *beau monde* of the table, by engaging deep in borough politics, and turning those attentions to profit, from the contrast they afforded to the seeming indifference of De Vere.

But though from this little incident, Clayton reaped advantage in certain schemes of ambition, and the keen eye of Lord Cleveland, versed in this sort of play, detected much of his design, it wholly escaped the person most

interested to understand it, namely, the unconscious De Vere. Had it concerned him indeed more nearly, his obtuseness as to this, would have been the same; for he had neither eye nor ear but for very different objects, in Constance and her admirer.

Constance herself, who was never out of her place, seemed, on a day like this, peculiarly in it: for it is certain, in receiving and returning the thousand little compliments, which it became her to receive and return, the native dignity and collectedness of demeanour, which we have so often described, never had more room to display themselves.

The simplicity of her attire, which at first had struck many as remarkable, only made her the more conspicuous; and Cleveland, who was himself disposed to prefer great sumptuousness in woman's dress, and had often been consulted on the subject by very great ladies, was so impressed with this novel charm in Constance, that, after confessing his former tastes, he owned she had made him a convert to hers.

The little interchange of looks, and notice of individual parts of dress, which this necessarily occasioned, denoted a sort of familiarity

which would have any thing but pleased De Vere at any time; and in the frame of mind he was in, it was, for a while, insupportable.—He looked round for assistance, but found it not where he first sought it—in his neighbour Herbert, who seemingly, much to his annoyance, had been pressed by Lady Elizabeth into a deep disquisition upon the distinction of ranks in society.

But on Mortimer's left hand was the little Euphemia, whose gentle manners and modest form had always made her a sort of favourite of his. To her he turned, and, as he had sometimes done before, might have drawn her out in conversation; but catching a look from Constance across the table, for the soul of him he could not proceed. Yet afterwards, upon observing the still increasing attentions of the Earl, seemingly not unwelcome to the lady, he for two moments felt he knew not what desire of retaliation, which impelled him to show the most marked kindness of manner to his little neighbour.

But it was only for two moments; for his pride of character immediately asserted itself. He felt not only that he was doing his cousin wrong, by presuming to think he had any claim

upon her; but that he was not doing himself right, in a demonstration of particularity to another woman, suited perhaps to a male coquet, but not to De Vere. This had such an effect upon him, that he fell into the opposite extreme; and, from having been markedly kind, became as markedly neglectful. 'Twas hard upon Euphemia; but of such wayward materials are the best of us sometimes composed.

He was, however, at last relieved by Herbert, who had profited by a question from Lord Mowbray to Lady Elizabeth, to escape from a deep lamentation on the inroads made by commercial riches upon the exclusive consideration, in other times so properly enjoyed by the nobility alone. Lady Elizabeth, whose political ambition at least centered in Lord Mowbray, could not refuse to listen to his account of some proposed alterations he was making at the Castle; and Herbert, turning to De Vere, fairly got rid of the task she had imposed upon him, of giving his opinion of Miller's book upon Ranks, just then published.

De Vere also profited by this release, and at last began to enjoy the observation excited by various little groups within eye and ear shot,

who trusted, good easy people! full surely, that they were independent of both.

The Partridges, for example, had absolutely absorbed Sir Melmoth Strickland, who, from the laugh, loud and frequent, with which whatever he uttered was received, was less of a coxcomb than a thousand others of his age, if he did not think himself a wit, or at least the most agreeable man in the room. Miss Zephyrina had not, indeed, thus favoured him from the beginning, but had bestowed the whole of her attentions upon Lord Eustace, who never was in worse condition to receive them; for he evidently wished not only the dinner, but the day, to be over, that he might get back to London with Cleveland.

"Who are those foolish young women?" asked Herbert of De Vere.

"They are distant relations of Lady Constance," answered Mortimer.

"Seemingly *very* distant," observed the Doctor.

"Have a care," rejoined De Vere, looking at Lady Elizabeth; then added, in a low voice, "their mamma."

Herbert, who was not remarkable for great

consideration for the sex, drily replied, "It would do her no harm had she heard me."

Sir Bertie now began to revel in the delightful opportunity he had achieved of cultivating such a neighbour as Eustace, and conceived it behoved him to show some knowledge of high acquaintance; he therefore began to criticise the party assembled, observing it was a very mixed one.

"These parties generally are," said Lord Eustace.

"They must be very amusing sometimes to *vous* autres," added Sir Bertie.

"You ought rather to say *nous* autres," replied Eustace, with as much gravity as he could command.

Sir Bertie bowed till his nose almost touched the table.

"There is, however, some good company," continued the Knight; "and how very well Lord Westbrook looks."—Here he fixed his eyes on a gentleman in Lord Mowbray's neighbourhood, of the name of Stapylton.

"Lord Westbrook!" exclaimed Eustace, "he is in Italy!"

"Oh! I see I am mistaken," replied Sir Bertie, taking out his glass; "I am really quite

blind: I see it is Lord Melton, whom I have sometimes met at Court."

"Lord Melton is in France," replied Eustace; "and is at least twenty years older than that gentleman, who is a Mr. Stapylton, and who, indeed, is often at Court, having a place in the household."

"I knew I had seen him there," rejoined Sir Bertie, *almost* disconcerted; and, willing to forget Mr. Stapylton, immediately added, "I am afraid the poor Bishop of Salisbury begins to break;" and he looked pointedly at Dr. Herbert, over against him.

"If you mean the dignitary over the way," said Eustace, excessively amused, "that is Dr. Herbert, Head of —— College, Oxford."

"Impossible!" returned Sir Bertie, now much confused; "I cannot surely be so blind!" and here his countenance fell, and he was silent for three whole minutes.

But Harclai, who, as we have said, sat next him, and to his great enjoyment had heard the whole conversation, was kind enough not to let him languish in obscurity; and knowing his history, observed, loud enough for Eustace to hear, "Yours is a very fine christian name, Sir Bertie."

"Are you related to the Ancaster family?" asked Eustace.

"No; not related," answered Sir Bertie; but not disliking the question.

"Perhaps a godson of the Duke?" pursued Harclai drily.

The Knight had no wish to destroy the supposition, but could not decently confirm it; he therefore was silent, wisely considering that if Harclai was wrong, it was no part of his duty to set him right. At the same time feeling hemmed up between two persons whose curiosity he did not exactly make out, but began to suspect, he knew not which way to look, and felt, for a time at least, uncomfortable enough to give Harclai all the satisfaction he had intended to derive from him.

We pass the rest of the dinner, and the exertions, heavy enough, of the various parties into which the table was divided, to make their constraint appear like ease. We pass the still heavier exertions afterwards, to give a general interest to the conversation among the gentlemen; though we do not do this for any thing that is to come more exhilarating among the ladies. From Lady Constance's account, when they had withdrawn, never had her desire to

make people pleased with one another, succeeded so ill. From this account it should seem that her drawing-room, except where a little enlivened by pride, and resistance to pride, was the prototype of an animated description of English country society, taken afterwards, and indeed in the wilds of Northumberland; but taken by a Staël, and applicable perhaps to counties nearer the sun.

"Elle (la société) était composée de sept femmes les plus graves de la province; deux d'entre elles étaient des demoiselles de cinquante ans, timides comme à quinze. Une femme disait à l'autre; 'Ma chère, croyez-vous que l'eau soit assez bouillante pour la verser sur le thè?'—'Ma chère,' répondait l'autre, 'je crois que ce serait trop tôt; car ces Messieurs ne sont pas encore prêts à venir.'—'Resteront-ils longtemps à table aujourdhui,' disait la troisième; 'qu'en croyez-vous, ma chère?'—'Je ne sais pas,' répondait la quatrième. 'Je crois plutôt qu'ils parlent de cette chasse au renard qui les a tant occupés la semaine passée: je crois cependant que le diner sera bientôt fini.'—'Ah! je ne l'espère guères,' disait la sixième en soupirant, et le silence recommençait."

Such had been the appearance of even Con-

stance's drawing-room, where the pensive habits of her aunt could give her little assistance, and the false and silly pride of her Partridge kinswomen gave her the reverse of it. All therefore were glad of the arrival of the gentlemen, who came flocking in with looks in equal want of relief, and seemingly rejoiced to revive those spirits with coffee, which even wine had not succeeded in elevating.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASQUE.

Come now, what masques, what dances shall we have,
To wear away this long age of three hours,
Between our after supper, and bed time?

SHAKSPEARE.

A GROOM of the chambers now entered the drawing-room, furnished with a number of little printed bills, announcing those intended theatricals, which, we may remember, had for some days been in preparation; and as the expectation of the little drama, thus announced, occupied all minds, there was a deliverance from that greatest distress of Englishmen and Englishwomen,—the fear of one another. There was now a common topic, of no inconsiderable interest, equal almost to a change of ministry, or an election itself.

The bills set forth the title and characters of the representation, with the names of the actors; and the entertainment purported to be—

"A MASQUE
Compiled from the older Poets.
" The Queen of Arcadia, by Miss ——.
" Sylvan, by Miss ——.
" Hours of Night, by Misses ——, &c. &c."

Many were the questions and conjectures upon all this. What was the exact meaning of Masque? Who was the author or compiler? Who were the older poets? How could the hours of night, or any hours, be represented upon the stage?

A Lady Colbourne, an authoress of note, here particularly distinguished herself, in answering several critical inquiries; nay, once had the effrontery to set Miss Partridge right, in a conjecture in which that young lady was lamentably wrong, as to the sex of Sylvan.

Miss Partridge's remark had been made to Sir Melmoth, and she blushed a little, a very little, at the correction; but made up for it by murmuring in a loud whisper, that she had never been an authoress; which produced a repartee from Lady Colbourne, who in a whisper to a neighbour, equally loud, observed it would have been of no detriment to her knowledge, if she had.

As to the compiler, it was at least no general secret, since Clayton, who had discovered it

from Lord Mowbray, had disclosed it to Lord Cleveland, and he to all his circle. The subject, however, was still strictly concealed; nor could Constance herself answer the numerous questions that were made to her upon it, but professed herself equally ignorant with her guests.

The theatre was tastefully decorated; the stage representing a sylvan scene, not merely in the perspective of painting, but set off on all sides with living plants and shrubs. Among these a group of little actresses appeared, fluttering about in spangled dresses, with wings, representing the Hours of Night. To these entered Sylvan; and the following dialogue, taken from an old composition of other times, commenced between him and one of the Hours. These two characters were represented by two beautiful girls of twelve or thirteen, whose silver voices, and impressive manner, pleased all.

"*Sylvan.* Tell me, gentle Hour of Night,
Wherein dost thou most delight?
Hour. Not in sleep.
Sylvan. Wherein then?
Hour. In the frolic view of men.
Sylvan. Lov'st thou music?
Hour. Oh! 'tis sweet
Sylvan. What 's dancing
Hour. E'en the mirth of feet.

Sylvan. Joy you in fairies and in elves?
Hour. We are of that sort ourselves —
But Sylvan, say, why do you love
Only to frequent the grove?
Sylvan. Life is fullest of content,
When delight is innocent.
Hour. Pleasure must vary, not be long;
Search, then, elsewhere for dance and song."*

Sylvan, however, tells the Hours that he is then in quest, not of dance or song, but of a rural deity, who had been lately appointed by Jove to reign over those woods and plains, and who had only just taken possession of her sovereignty.

Other masquers, representing Nymphs of the woods, flock in and tell the Hours they were on the same quest. Then the Hour who had addressed Sylvan, pointing to a castle at a distance, informs her visitors, in the following lines, that she can show them the way to the object of their search.

"Ye swains and breathing roses of the wood!
Fair silver-buskined nymphs, both great and good,

* We believe the copies of this Masque are peculiarly scarce; but we have no doubt of its authenticity, having taken these lines from the amusing, and far more than amusing work of that polite scholar, acute inquirer, and amiable man, Mr. D'Israeli; we mean the "Curiosities of Literature."

I know this quest of yours, and free intent,
Is all in honour and devotion meant,
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low rev'rence I adore as mine."

After this, she tells them to follow her, in a song which was beautifully sung by the little actress.

"O'er the smooth enamelled green
Where no print of step hath been,
Follow me, as I sing
And touch the warbled string,
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm, star-proof.
Follow, follow, follow me;
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendour, as befits
Her Deity.
Such a rural queen,
All Arcadia hath not seen."

The last couplet was a chorus by the Hours; the children sang it charmingly; and amid the applauses of the spectators, the scene opening, discovered a seat of state, on which sat a graceful girl, set off in pastoral elegance, and representing the tutelary goddess, and queen of Arcadia. The little deity received the homage of her new subjects with graceful benignity, and promised protection for themselves, their groves,

and their meadows. But while expatiating on the delight of her new condition, Mercury enters, and addressing her as the favoured of Jove, tells her that the more she is favoured, the more important must be the objects of her care: that it is not the intention of the father of gods and men to leave her long in a mere rural sovereignty; but that she must soon prepare to be translated to the city, there to fix her temple in the bustle of resort.

All this consumed about an hour; and we may suppose, considering the audience, that it was not viewed without pleasure. In fact, without the interest of such near relationship between some of the spectators and the performers, it was not a thing for a stranger to view with indifference; for all the children performed most pleasingly, and the two principal actors both spoke and sang with great impression.

But exclusive of this, there is a charm in the innocence of infancy, which sets off infant powers so irresistibly, that not merely the most rugged, but the most withered heart is impressed with it.

On this principle (for there was little interest in the story,) Harclai was moved; and Lord Cleveland, for some reason or other, showed

signs of being so too, though we doubt a little whether from the same cause as Harclai.

Every thing was otherwise gay and brilliant; and whatever critics might have been disposed to say of the invention, or the revival of old quaint allegories, the thing was at least uncommon, and the guests, struck with the appositeness of the application, turned their eyes in quest of Constance.

The trial to which she was now exposed, it required all her self-possession to stand; especially as Lord Cleveland had taken care, by particular gestures, not to let the allusions escape. She was indeed distressed at being thus brought forward; and, though secretly not displeased at this tribute of gallantry from Mortimer, she, at the moment, regretted deeply that he had made her the object of such gazing attention. Indeed, the whole company, or at least all those of note, or whose admiration might be expressed without appearing an absolute liberty, crowded round her with eagerness, to pour into her youthful ear the compliments which her beauty and elegance might have very sincerely prompted, even if her high station had not seemed to command them.

It appeared to rain compliments; some of

them a little too plain, but some of them refined; and if the success of her little scene pleased her, and rendered her a little ('twas only a little) more alive to the homage paid to the Queen of Arcadia on her birth-night festivity, I will not be the first to blame the swelling of her youthful heart, for what she afterwards bitterly blamed herself.

Yet, though in reality she could not be very angry with Mortimer for complimentary applications, so classically wrapped up, she would, at the moment, have been better content had he chosen any other subject for his Muse. But he did not immediately appear; and if she felt displeasure at all, it was but transient, and lost in the satisfaction of perceiving that her projected theatrical entertainment had succeeded to her very wish.

Buoyant with the spirits which this occasioned, she now proposed dancing; and all moved to the ball-room, where the allegory would have been forgotten, but for the comments made upon it by some of the gentlemen.

It is said walls have ears; and if it is so any where, it is in the unguarded moments and the crowding of a ball-room, where the walls are even lined with ears, (and those of peculiar

quickness,)—the ears of chaperons; who, for the most part, choose their stations close against them.—Thus, not half a yard from Lady Eleanor and the Marchioness, Lord Cleveland began a conversation with Clayton, ignorant who, or that any one, was behind them.

"And what," said Cleveland, "do you think of the fine pageant we have been seeing?"

"I have no right to think in this house," answered Clayton.

"If you had said, like old Lenthall the Speaker, to see, or hear, or speak, except as this house should command you, you might be right," returned the Earl; "but thoughts, you know, are free all the world over."

"Ay, but not to be spoken."

"You have some treason then in your thoughts, which your dutiful heart dare not utter."

"Nay! no treason," said Clayton, "to any one to whom I owe allegiance."

"That is, to the lord of the Castle;" returned Cleveland; "but what say you to the lady?"

"I am equally clear," returned Clayton.

"The minstrel then! the bard! the poet! What shall I call him? the compiler from poets!"

"He is my friend," observed Clayton.

"So he is mine; but surely this does not exempt him from a little good-natured criticism!"

"I think then—or rather I fear—that the lady of his vows—"

"Of his vows!"

"Yes! *Whom with low reverence I adore as mine!*—Did not your lordship observe?"

"I did; but what of her?"

"That she has no reason to *thank* him."

"Surely, then, she would be a most ungrateful lady; for never were there such complimentary puerilities!"

"That is what I fear," observed Clayton: "I hope it is ill-founded; but I shall be surprised if her delicacy be not wounded at being so brought forward. I am really quite sorry for De Vere."

"*Mr.* De Vere," said Lord Cleveland, (laying a stress on the word *Mr.*, to mark a sense to which he was very much alive, whenever he thought a *Parvenu* too familiar,) *Mr.* De Vere is very much obliged to you. But why are you so sorry?"

"Because she has been an object of public flattery, which I know she cannot bear."

"And yet I should like to have been the flatterer," observed Lord Cleveland pensively, "but for the childish scenes in which it was conveyed."

Here they were joined by Dr. Herbert; and the Earl, wishing for his criticism, asked his opinion, but was surprised, and perhaps not over pleased, to find him (generally so severe a critic) a declared approver.

"It seems," said Herbert, "put together in the very spirit of the old poets."

"A carpenter, or any clumsy workman, puts together," observed Cleveland; "and I suppose you have used that term to designate your opinion of the workmanship."

"No, indeed," replied the Divine; "I was quite pleased."

"And the allusions to the lady of the Castle?"

"Were a delicate hint of what was expected from her accomplishments and station."

"But the poetry! Had I not known the compiler, I should have thought it hired from some servitor or sizer of Oxford or Cambridge."

"You are right," said the Doctor, significantly; "for it was chiefly hired from one

Milton; who, as you say, was a sizer at Cambridge."

The Earl had rather forgotten; but not minding the innuendo, he went on: "De Vere is a lucky man; for his person seems to please the lady in the dance, and his poetry does not displease the most refined critic in England. But I forgot he was your ward, and always a favourite."

"I am not ashamed of him," said the Doctor; then turning, he beheld Lady Eleanor, who, with the Marchioness, had heard every word of this conversation, and who willingly made room for him between them. Lord Cleveland turned too; but, feeling not so welcome, he stalked away in gloomy *hauteur*, to recover himself, by observing De Vere and his cousin followed in the dance by the admiration of the whole room.

CHAPTER V.

MISGIVING.

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad
It wearies me ; you say it wearies you :
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
I am to learn.

SHAKSPEARE.

"I LIKE not this great lord so well as I did," said the Marchioness to Constance, when the latter joined her in her dressing-room, on the night that closed upon her birthday; "yet I can forgive much to the jealousy of his love."

She then would have acquainted Constance with the conversation in the ball-room; but Constance had before been told it by Lady Eleanor word for word.

"It is evident," continued the Marchioness, "though I know not why, that he did not like your little pageant. He agreed with Mr. Clayton, in thinking you might feel the allusions too pointed."

" Mr. Clayton has little right to obtrude an opinion," replied Constance; " but as to the allusions, I did not like them myself, for I was too flatteringly made an object of unpleasant observation."

" Your birthday would excuse that," observed the Marchioness.

" Perhaps so," said Constance, pensively. " But now it is over, I begin not to like this birthday; and as to the masque, you see the bard wants to send me to London, to reign over I know not what sort of people, and leave Sylvan, and the Hours, and the woods, all to themselves."

" And would you not like to reign in London?" asked the Marchioness.

" I care not for reigning any where," returned Constance gravely, " unless I had subjects to my mind."

" Lord Cleveland, for instance," said the Marchioness.

" Oh! no!—I liked him not before; and this petulance towards my little pageant does not make me like him more."

" You do like the masque then?"

" I liked the acting, though not the subject; and I think I may even like the composi-

tion, when Dr. Herbert, a man worth a thousand Lord Clevelands, approved it. At any rate, who could fail to like those interesting children?"

"Ay, but the story! and the application! Your great temple, you see, is to be in the world: you are to take a lead, and act up to your station. All very proper; I only wonder the poet did not associate some demi-god, some Lord Cleveland with you, in your reign!"

"My dear Marchioness," said Constance, "one would think you and my aunt had combined to fill my head with things which at present are the farthest from it. My father too has hinted something about Lord Cleveland, and the *éclat* of a king's favourite. But why, on just entering the world, am I not to be allowed to take my own view of it? Why, just arrived at the enjoyment of liberty, am I to act as if I had none?"

"Dear Constance," said the Marchioness, moved at seeing her moved, "nobody more than myself would have you see and appreciate the world, for which you are so formed."

"There again," observed Constance, "is my aunt—her very sentiment, her very language. She too hinted something of great alliance; and

even Mortimer, in the course of the evening, talked in the same strain. I own this both teases and puzzles me. I shall grow froward and peevish. Indeed, I am so already, I fear, with my dear Lady Eleanor: for though I can understand my father's partiality to Lord Cleveland, I own I cannot comprehend her motive, and still less my cousin's, for wishing me so soon out of the way."

The Marchioness fell into musing upon this, till she observed; "Depend upon it, whatever Lady Eleanor does, (and I really believe I may add her son,) proceeds from some notion of high duty which must always render it respectable."

"I believe so too," said Constance, and a deep sigh escaped her, which to many, who reflect that it came from one of the favourites of the world, set off with all the gifts of fortune, beauty, riches, high descent, elegance, and what is more, innocence of life, and all on the night of her birthday, when a whole county had assembled to pay her willing homage—to these, I say—that such a creature should sigh, and sigh heavily, might appear extraordinary. But let all such look deeper than the surface. Let them reflect, that an

earl's daughter is no more than the same compound of human feelings (as she is of the same mould) as the simplest cottager. But should they go farther, and wonder that the innocence and gentleness we have described in Constance, should be visited already with uneasiness, let them remember, too, that the scheme of the ever watching Power that directs, as well as made the world, is trial; trial, to which, (so inscrutable is the scheme) the purest innocence seems often the most exposed.

" For not the blameless life, nor artless youth,
Nor beauty's bloom, nor innocence, nor truth,
Can move that mind mysterious, whose dread power
Doth, chastening, rule our transitory hour,
And low doth lay the proud man's haughtiest boast,
And oft the brightest virtue tries the most."

Let me not, however, be too prophetic of the fate of Constance, but leave herself to unravel it with the reader, as the story proceeds; satisfied if she is as interesting to him as she is to me. It is certain, that at the end of this joyous night, when the whole castle had been in a blaze,

" With pomp, and feast, and revelry—
With masque, and antique pageantry ;"

when old and young had opened their hearts to pleasure, and were full of the praises and happiness of the heiress of Mowbray,—the heiress herself felt an unusual heaviness about her heart. It prevented her rest long after her friend the Marchioness had kissed her for the night, and wished her repose.

But the world, which had so long occupied her, at length shut out, her reflective habit returned, with perhaps double force, from contrast, and the excitement and tension of her nerves during an eventful day gave way at length to a relaxation which was only increased by the previous exertion. Far from being able to sleep, all that she had seen or heard passed in review before her; the feasting, the dance, the rich display, the profusion, not to say waste. Then came the new characters she had seen, the conversations, the jealous airs, the struggles to shine, the actings, the simulations, the dissimulations! At one time she might have laughed at these; at present they were not laughable. In truth, seemingly in the midst of pleasure, an unaccountable fearfulness came over her from another cause. For she had been led by natural feeling, as well as educa-

tion, to the purest habits of religion; and never contemplated her own lot, without wondering at the intentions, as well as the bounty of Providence, in giving it. Though from nature lofty enough upon occasion, far from being elevated into pride by this, she was often humbled in the thought of its uncertainty; and this thought generally assailed her most, when she had most seemed to shine, as now, in the favour of the world.

On the present occasion, every thing had bowed down before her; she had enjoyed it, whilst coursing the gay circle that surrounded her, in which not an eye that beheld, but would have pronounced her pleasure unmixed. And so it was, as far as innocence could make it pure, and as far as crowds of participators prevented reflection. But left to herself, and excitement at an end, her spirits fell; she wondered what there was in her that could make her so favoured. Her position seemed too high for her desert, or the fortune of any simple individual. She saw the stars of heaven through her casements: they seemed to mock what had been going forward; to remind her, from their immensity, of her own littleness, and of the

fragile and momentary tenure by which her greatness, small as it was in the comparison, was held.

A sad sort of foreboding suddenly came over her. She thought of Lord Cleveland, as the source of future ills; she thought of the uncertainties of life, of the mysteries of Providence, and of the precipitous downfal that often attends the promises of the most seemingly durable prosperity.

From this, she passed to even severe self-accusation, at having been occupied the whole day by her grandeur, and the homage of flatterers; and taxed herself with ungrateful neglect of Him, who alone, and for His own purposes, had thus magnified her above her fellow-creatures.

Whether all this arose from the exhaustion of her spirits, or that there is in truth such a thing as foreboding, the instrumentality of which is used by the Almighty in shaping our actions; or whether, as was probable, it was the simple re-action of a pious and modest mind,—this virtuous and excellent creature was depressed even to sadness, on the close of that day which her friends as well as herself had expected would prove so happy. Thoughtful,

and, as we have said, uncomfortably prophetic, instead of lying down to rest, she continued in reflection long after all, or nearly all her guests, who had shared in her festivities, had forgotten her, and whatever cares they had of their own, in sleep.

In this state, she had recourse to the only thing that on such occasions can console a depressed heart, and which, in the few trials she had hitherto undergone, had always consoled hers,—a commendation of her fate to the favour of her Maker. Before Him, therefore, she humbled herself with sincere reverence; and imploring forgiveness, if she had thought too highly of her own merits, besought Him that if it was His will to try her, it might not be beyond her strength.

She reaped from devotion its usual reward. She grew more confiding, more hopeful of protection; and though the morning was now beginning to break, she lay down at last to a refreshing sleep, having first wiped away some precious tears, which she could not prevent,—tears that were

> "The gracious signs of sweet remorse,
> And pious awe, that feared to have offended."

CHAPTER VI.

PROVIDENCE.

——Yet again, methinks,
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming toward me; and my inward soul
With nothing trembles.

SHAKSPEARE.

And why should tears flow from one described so innocent? And how could they be excited by festivity, or a fair and harmless display of magnificence?

Strange and unnatural to suppose such inconsistent compunctions in the bosom of a young and noble lady, on the very close of a birthnight in which she had charmed all eyes! But my business is with facts; and as Constance, at present at least, could not be sophisticated by a world she had scarcely seen, I will trust to that simple circumstance, and her own character, for proof that I have recorded nothing unnatural. Who, indeed, not absolutely worn out, or plunged in dissipation for a

longer time than its novelty could charm—who that has discovered the powerless realities of the pageantries of life,—but has felt a re-action, a want of assistance, and a remorse, such as has been described?

The disposition in which we left Constance, was not merely transient; nor were the thoughts with which she lay down to rest dissipated, like an evil dream, by the cheerfulness of the morning sun.

At breakfast, it was remarked that she bore the traces of anything but joy; and many of her younger guests wondered that a beauty, an earl's daughter, and an heiress, *could* exhibit a face of seriousness.

But, in fact, the enjoyment of the day before seemed now at least to have been problematical. What she had seen, had by no means satisfied her; for it had left her with no very high opinion of her species. The fashionable part of her company seemed stiff, jealous, and unimpressive; the rustic, equally jealous, and not the more sincere from having less polish.

Examining her own part in the exhibition, she could not divest herself of the notion, that to be the object and centre of a great circle, one must be, or at least seem to be, a great

actress. This did not please; and in the midst of company and magnificence, she found there was a void in her heart, for which, as it was unexpected, so she could not account. It was, therefore, without regret, that she saw her guests rapidly diminishing as the day advanced.

Unreasonable Constance! thus to deal with the gifts of the world, and not to "take the good the gods provide thee!" She wondered at it herself; and upon being rallied by the Marchioness, and questioned (though without raillery) by Lady Eleanor, she confessed all that had passed in her heart the evening before; and in particular the little sufficiency of the apparently gay scene in which they had been engaged, to supply the enjoyment she had expected.

The three ladies had escaped from the Partridge family and from the gentlemen who were occupied with their politics, into the path that led to the bee-garden, when this confession began; and I shall make no apology for presenting it to the reader, as characteristic of all three.

Lady Eleanor said she was not surprised, for she had herself remarked the conversation of those who had approached Lady Constance;

"and whether," said Lady Eleanor, "from my retired habits, or that the world is really changed, I found none who came up to the notions I had formed of fit companions for the mind of my niece."

"And yet we must not be too fastidious," said the Marchioness; "the world has many disagreeable things in it, men and women among them; yet, upon the whole, it is a good world, and the little defects that appear in manners and character in mixed society, where all character seems for a time disguised, may soften down, and disappear upon better acquaintance."

"The acting of Mr. Freshville, for instance," said Lady Eleanor; "the folly of Sir Bertie; or, I am sorry to say it, the insolence of my kinswoman, Lady Elizabeth, and her daughters."

"Why, even of these," observed the Marchioness, "we have only seen some faults that certainly float on the surface. Should we look deeper, we might find some counter-balancing good. I cannot, I own, discover much under the solemnity of Mr. Freshville; but Sir Bertie has, at least, great good-nature; and the youthful silliness of your young cousins may not prevent them hereafter from proving good wives and mothers."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lady Eleanor. "I love your good-nature, Marchioness, but you have been too happy in the world; the Marquess and a prosperous life have spoiled you, and long may you continue to be so spoiled."

Lady Clanellan rather smiled at her earnestness; and as, like most people who have no reason to be out of humour with the world, she was in *good*-humour with it, and had always endeavoured to infuse this spirit into her young pupil, she did not choose this representation to pass without comment; she therefore observed, "You will at least allow, my dear Lady Eleanor, that I have had no reason for misgivings in the midst of prosperity, and that our dear Constance's fears, at the end of her fête, may have been, as they probably were, the mere effect of fatigue."

"It was the effect," said Constance, "of an unsatisfied feeling, for which I could not, and cannot now, give a reason, where all is seemingly so promising of satisfaction."

"As if," said the Marchioness, "there being different lots in life, we should not pursue, or enjoy the high, as well as the low."

"That is all very true and sensible," answered Lady Eleanor; "but the fear is, that

the high lot may make us think too much of ourselves, and too little of the Giver; though that, I am sure, will never be my dear Constance's condition."

"I trust not," said Constance; "and yet the feeling I had, was as if I was not sufficiently humble, and deserved to be lowered. I thought, too, as I looked fearfully at these proud walls, and recollected *who* I was, how much happier I should be if I had a brother."

"In that respect, I scarcely know what to wish for you," said Lady Clanellan; "but leave it safely to Him whom you so properly invoked not to try you beyond your strength. Yet I cannot help owning, that had you a brother, it might save you some trials."

"It might save me from Lord Cleveland," observed Constance, with a sigh; "and on this I could not help brooding. I thought myself too great, and could not help repeating some of those passages which Mortimer is so often repeating.

'One heav'd on high, to be hurl'd down below;
A garish flag,
To be the aim of ev'ry dangerous shot.'

On the other hand, I thought, and wistfully

too, of the passage in your favourite Walton, which we are all so fond of—'I will walk the meadows, by some gliding stream, and there contemplate the lilies that take no care.' I almost wished myself one of these lilies."

"These are all delightful indications," said the Marchioness, "and show a disposition, the farthest in the world from what you dread; and upon the whole," added she, smiling, "I think you may be reconciled to your fate, of being a great heiress; though I allow it is not every heart that can stand prosperity."

"Will it give me one real friend?" asked Constance.

"It neither will, nor ought to *give* you one," replied her aunt; "too happy if it do not forbid your distinguishing friends from flatterers."

"That is what I most feel, and most fear;" answered Constance, with much seriousness.

"And what is to forbid," asked the Marchioness, "that there should be persons in your own station, as estimable and capable of friendship, at the very least, as those below you: and if there are, that they should seek out and love one so worthy to be loved? It is, surely, the saddest, and most unjust of all

mistakes, to suppose that the great have no feeling; or that because they may be rich, they cannot be good."

"Yet we are admonished pretty pointedly, in the sacred book," said Lady Eleanor, "about the difficulty of the rich man. However, nobody who knows you, Marchioness, will say this is universal. Yet, let us confess, there are not many Lord Clanellans among the Peers; and I should say fewer still like his wife among the Peeresses."

"I confess no such thing," said the Marchioness; "and could name many an Earl's daughter, the ornament as well as inhabitant of a Castle, like our dear Constance here, who, while they are formed to adorn a high station, have all the gentler virtues of a moderate one."

"I am sure I will not question it," replied Lady Eleanor; "you will; however, at least own, that prosperity has a tendency to harden the heart, though your's may have escaped."

"You would render me vain in the very worst way of being so," replied the Marchioness; "vain of humility, for if I have so escaped it has surely been from a sense of my own littleness."

"The very thing," observed Constance,

"which I felt so home, when I thought of the masque, and all that was said upon it. I was even almost angry with Mortimer for his undeserved gallantry. There seemed a voice whispering in my ear the folly I had been guilty of in listening to it, and the precariousness of all on which I had been so complimented."

"'Twas a kind voice," said Lady Eleanor.

"I shall not soon forget it," answered Constance.

The conversation was here interrupted by their meeting Dr. Herbert, De Vere, and Lord Cleveland, who had been to the Dairy-house in quest of the ladies; Lord Cleveland declaring they ought not to submit to be cut off from the only society that made the country bearable. He was about to address Constance, but saw something in her countenance which disclosed deeper subjects than those on which he wished to entertain her.

"Dr. Herbert," said the Marchioness, "I want your assistance against a couple of philosophers,—(no, I mean any thing but philosophers,)—in petticoats, who are raving against the world, for not being able to make us happy; when I say it is a very pretty world, and has

les meilleures dispositions possible to confer happiness, if we only choose to think so."

"And yet," said Lady Eleanor, "we are only discussing the necessity of guarding against confidence in the continuation of prosperity, and the danger to the heart of supposing the tide will never turn."

"My cloth would necessarily lead me to be with you," said the Doctor, "but I am not so instructed as I might be, and you had better," added he, laughing, "consult the Miss Partridges; for I mistake, if *they* ever think about the tide's turning."

"The Doctor is afraid of committing himself," said Lord Cleveland; "but he is a courtier: now I, who am none—"

Here Herbert and De Vere, and even the Marchioness herself, laughed outright; but the Earl, unabashed, proceeded,—"I, who am none, side with Lady Clanellan. As to the tide, we know that there is one in the affairs of men, which leads on to fortune; but

'Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.'

This is my creed, and by this be my actions governed."

"A very good creed," observed Herbert, still laughing; "for all sanguine young people, like you and Lady Clanellan."

"Nay," said Cleveland, "I am most serious; nor did you ever know any cautious, mean-spirited, shop-keeping rascal, who calculated tides and seasons before he would move, successful to any extent. I do not mean that he might not have a grovelling sort of success, but he never could soar with eagle flight, unblenched and undazzled by the sun."

"There was one Icarus," said the Doctor, growing serious.

"Nay," cried Lord Cleveland, "I trust you are not going to lecture us against ambition, for fear of melting our pinions."

"And why not," asked the Doctor, "if you are for flying too high? The ambition I preach is reasonable, not ruinous. But it seems, that if a throne were vacant—"

"I should wish to mount if I could," said Cleveland.

Lady Eleanor, willing to recal the subject which was still uppermost with her, observed, "It was not ambition we were talking of so much as the tendency of success to promote a dangerous indifference towards Him who sent it,

and the almost certainty that this indifference would be followed with most miserable visitations."

"This is, indeed, a serious subject," said Herbert, "and worthy this appropriate spot, where the towering castle, on the one hand, frowns upon us in all the pride of power; while on the other, this alcove presents us with a view of the gentlest beauty. Never were ambition and content so well contrasted."

The Doctor spoke truly, for the alcove was placed just where the sides of the brook opening, let in a reach of the pebbly stream, which delighted the eye by its placidity. The whole party consentaneously sat down to enjoy it.

"'Tis, at least, a charming place to moralize in," said the Doctor, as he seated himself; "and not the worse for its contrast to the splendour of yesterday."

"Did you then disapprove the splendour of yesterday?" asked Lord Cleveland.

"By no means; provided," added Herbert cheerfully, "no one's head was turned by it."

Lady Clanellan looked at Constance and smiled, and Constance could not help smiling too.

"Shall I tell you a secret?" said Lady Clanellan; "Lady Constance here thinks she is too great, and that a still small voice (I suppose of her guardian sylph), warns her to beware of the giddiness you have mentioned."

"It would be good for us all," answered Herbert, "if we had such voices always attendant upon us. But what really was your question?"

"We had scarcely agreed upon it," answered Lady Eleanor, "but I would ask, for myself, what it is that creates the sometimes unaccountable feeling of distress and danger, the fearful misgiving which a good mind feels, (for I believe it is chiefly a good mind that feels it,) when our lot is cast so high that every thing seems to prosper. May it, or not, be the immediate interposition of heaven?"

"I see no reason against it," replied the Divine, "nor is the whole scheme of Providence, as the moral governor of the world, other than such imperceptible interposition. I will own to you, too, that a long course of prosperity seems the very state to call for it, and to predict reverses in the nature of punishment if you neglect it. I say, imperceptible, because you

must always take care, in regard to interposition, not to fall into the visionary error of supposing that Providence manifests itself to you *perceptibly*. Leave that to the beautiful images of poetry."

"How then are we to know?" asked Lady Clanellan.

"By the effects," answered Herbert. "We pray in the Church for the inspiration of a holy spirit; we pray for it in the closet; the effects are felt in our conduct; and the proofs we have of an ever watchful Providence, together with the certainty of our own failings, support the notion, that if we feel these effects, it arises from the goodness of Heaven, and cannot spring from the weakness of man."

"A beautiful theory," said Lady Clanellan.

"I wish it were as demonstrable as beautiful," observed Lord Cleveland: "but really I could not have expected this would be a subject for ladies who are so entirely at the head of good company. Surely 'it is but the lees and settlings of a melancholy blood.' Yet, that the *blood* of a Marchioness, still more of the Queen of Arcadia, should be *melancholy*, moves my wonder."

Constance blushed, and De Vere, feeling for

her, observed with some emphasis, that the subject was too deep, as well as too important, to be ridiculed.

"Believe me," returned Cleveland, seeing displeasure in Constance's eye, "I am the last man in the world to ridicule such a subject. I wish I could side with the Doctor; but though he talks of fearing prosperity, as if it were an evil, and of reverses, as if they were meant for punishment, the whole course of the world contradicts him. For it is full of instances of success, well followed up, and never failing, except from the failure of nerves in those who throw away their good fortune by being afraid to pursue it. On the other hand, how uniform are the instances of ill-luck in certain poor humble devils, who (do what they will) seem born never to prosper. Wonder not, therefore, if I am a worshipper of Fortune, and think to doubt, would be to affront her. What says youth to this?" added the Earl: "what thinks De Vere?"

"That I have not presumption enough to agree with you," answered De Vere.

"All this," observed Herbert, "depends upon a sanguine temperament, which, with submission, takes upon trust what it does not like

to examine. Yet even gamesters, who hold it a law to pursue a run of luck, always lay their account with seeing it change. But our subject, as I understand it from these ladies, lies far deeper than the view your Lordship has chosen to take of it."

"Far deeper, indeed," said Lady Eleanor, and the gestures of Constance showed she approved of the observation, though she said not a word.

"I know," observed Cleveland, "what fine theories may be, and are, spun out of this; but I have always thought them the visions of enthusiasts, in other words, of madmen."

"Is every one then," replied Herbert, with a searching look, "mad, in your Lordship's opinion, who believes in the government of Heaven?"

Lord Cleveland did not like the question, especially as he saw he was keenly examined by the elder ladies, and that Constance, though her looks were not bent upon him, was silently most observant. De Vere, too, was about to interpose a question, but thinking it would disconcert Cleveland still more, perhaps lower him with Constance, he abstained, from motives for

which Lord Cleveland, had he been in his place, would have thought him the greatest blockhead in the world.

Recovering himself a little, the gallant lord answered, "I am not so much my own enemy, in such a time and place, and with such company, as to throw away a precious hour in what would prove at best a dry controversy. Besides, though my antagonist is a philosopher of the court, he is also a divine, and what could I expect from so great a doctor, but to be tossed on the horns of some shocking dilemma. I will, however, just remark, that though there are a thousand amusing stories of interposition by dreams and ghosts, and other fancies, no one of any *monde* believes in them, and as little does history confirm the perçeptible interference of which we are speaking."

"Perceptible interference," replied the Divine, "is not, and indeed I have taken pains to premise, cannot be the question. For such interference would be a miracle, and miracles are over. But second causes are very different; and these feelings may all arise out of second causes. How these can be disposed so as to produce the events of the world, and even the operations of our mind, is a point so difficult to

ascertain, that careless men give it up: worldly men, who see nothing but second causes, laugh at it; in courts, where one great human creature seems a *first* cause, few are acquainted with it; in crowds no one has leisure to feel it. But, sooner or later, it comes home. In the dead of the night; in the retirement of the closet; in one's garden, or such a place as this, (particularly when alone,) be assured the 'still small voice' we speak of makes itself heard."

Constance was peculiarly pleased, nor liked the Earl for interrupting the Divine by asking him with a lurking sneer, if he had ever heard this voice?

"To say I have heard it speaking in *language*," answered the President, "or, like Lord Herbert, who, when writing against revelation by miracles, asserts the greatest of miracles in his own person;* to say I have in any manner experienced a *direct* interposition, would, perhaps, induce your Lordship to rank me among the gentry you mentioned just now—enthusiasts and madmen. But this I can say, (all philoso-

* See his most extraordinary account of music sent from Heaven, when he asked a sign to direct him in his design of publishing his book, De Veritate.

pher of the court as you have called me,) that there have been moments of abstraction from the court, and every thing else, but the contemplation of the Almighty in his providence, in which I have been fearfully impressed with his mysteries, and have been any thing but confident of myself."

"And what was the result?" asked Lord Cleveland.

"Always to do me good, for it always humbled me," replied the Doctor; "and then my fears subsided, and confidence returned."

The answer pleased Constance.

"To say the best of it," observed Lord Cleveland, "this was a mere private feeling, and proves little or nothing."

"It proves what we are talking of, as well as it will admit of proofs," said the Doctor. "The time, as I observed, is over when visible interposition was the condescending mode of directing the world; for, unhappily for us, there is now

> 'No more of talk when God or angel guest
> With man, as with his friend familiar, us'd
> To sit indulgent.'"

"That must indeed have been a happy time,"

said De Vere; and to that sentiment his cousin, by her looks, evidently responded.

"Instead of poetry, give me facts," said Cleveland. "What does history say to it?"

"Will you believe history if I tell you?" asked the Divine.

"I will not believe Livy's silly stories of voices in the air, any more than my Lord Clarendon, with his sleeping dream about the Duke of Buckingham, or his waking one of Lord Brooke, at Litchfield."

"You wish to touch me home," said the Doctor, "in mentioning the last. But setting aside my partiality for my favourite Cathedral, if you ask me seriously to say what I think, I am not one of those enlightened persons, like your Lordship, who have so settled the matter as not to consider the circumstances of Lord Brooke's death as peculiarly awful."

"I have never gone by the spot where he fell," said De Vere, who had been most attentive to this part of the conversation, "without feeling it so; nor can I laugh at Clarendon for appearing to favour the notion (he does no more), that this death was an absolute and immediate judgment."

"That such a mind as your's," cried Cleve-

land, "should think so! But I will refer you to a far better confutation than mine of so ridiculous a legend;" and he took a letter from his pocket-book, which he had just received from a man of high fashion, and some research in the olden literature of the country, though of little depth as a real philosopher, which he was even then affecting to be. He was a correspondent of Cleveland's on these subjects, on which they much agreed; but Herbert, who perfectly knew his shallowness, at the same time that he admitted his agreeable wit, observed instantly, on hearing his name, "He will make it ridiculous if he can, for he lives but to ridicule all that is serious. Barring his wit, however, which is delightful, his reasoning is in general as shallow, as his presumption is offensive."

"The cleverest man of the age," replied Cleveland.

"At an epigram if you will," said Herbert; "but at a truth, no conjuror. Let us first see what is Clarendon's story, and then hear the comment. Lord Brooke, perhaps a sincere and, as it should seem, a pious man, had resolved to storm the Close at Litchfield, which held for Charles. A little doubtful, it would appear,

of the lawfulness of his cause (he should have thought of that before he commenced rebel), he knelt down before the assault began, and prayed, if the cause he had engaged in was not just, that he might be cut off. Soon afterward he was shot. Now what does your cleverest man of the age say to this?"

"Why, he asks," replied Cleveland, "'Does the ruler of the universe inflict sudden destruction, as the *way to set right a conscientious man?*'"*

"And is this all?" said Herbert. "If it is, and it be witty, most unfortunately for the wit, Lord Brooke had not prayed to be set right, but to be "cut off" if wrong. So far, therefore, the wit depends upon a *false statement*, for his real prayer was complied with. But even without this, could there be no other reason for his death, than what concerned Lord Brooke? The notoriety of the prayer, and its issue, made it of the last importance to those who witnessed the facts. To them, opinion *was* set right, as far as such an example could set it right; and hence the argument against interposition, on account of absurdity, falls to absolute nothing."

* "Royal and Noble Authors."—Art. Brooke.

"Doctor," said Lady Eleanor, "I thank you for having cleared up this matter, against the scoffing of this fine gentleman, who, with all his point and high breeding, never was a favourite of mine."

Lady Clanellan and De Vere joined in these thanks, and Constance looked them.

"My poor friend!" exclaimed Lord Cleveland. "But he is a Whig, and I don't care for him. Nay, you have only kindled me more to hear a little history in support of your theory."

"I have no theory," returned the Doctor: "I only have held that prosperity is an instrument in the hands of the Most High, to try the piety and virtue of those who may be laid most low; that according as it is borne, reverse and punishment follow, and that this is the very simple course of a government by Providence."

"But I want examples," said Lord Cleveland.

"Surely your memory must be full of them," answered Herbert. "In ancient Rome, even the very triumphs (when, if at any time the principle might be forgotten) provided for its perpetuation. For there was this moral always to be gathered, in the midst of what outraged

all morality (a triumph)—that in the very ear of victory, the General was attended by a sort of remembrancer, whose business was to remind him of the uncertainties of greatness, and the possibility of reverse."

"Yet the term *felix* may be applied to many a person in history," observed the Earl, "who seemed never to think of reverse—"

"Until it came," answered the President: "the term was particularly applied by Cicero to Pompey, as recommendatory of him to a great command—yet who so miserable in the end?"

"What think you of Sylla?" asked Lord Cleveland.

"What do you of Marius?" answered the Doctor. "But even as to Sylla, whose good fortune was by heathenish blindness imputed as a crime to the gods, I would gladly have foregone all the heathenish happiness of his epitaph,* to have escaped the horror of his death.† There is another example."

"Have a care," cried Cleveland, "for we are getting into pedantry."

"Well, and I am by profession a pedant,"

* That no man had gone beyond him in doing good to his friends and harm to his enemies.

† By the *morbus pediculosus*.

said the Doctor; "so the ladies will only think I am in my vocation."

"Pedantry or not," said Lady Clanellan, "the ladies, I assure you, will think they have a right to illustrations of a subject that interests them, as well as the gentlemen."

"Well, then, I mean Polycrates," said the Doctor. I love his history, not so much for himself as for the different philosophy that governed him and his friend Amasis. 'You are too fortunate,' said Amasis: 'inflict some great mortification upon yourself, or the gods will abandon you.' Polycrates threw his ring into the sea, which was swallowed by a fish. The fish is caught, and the ring restored. 'See what a favourite of Fortune I am,' says Polycrates. 'I renounce you for it,' writes Amasis; 'you will be ruined.' Polycrates became hardened with prosperity, and was dethroned and crucified."

Here the Doctor paused.

"With my leave," said Lady Eleanor, "no one shall ever call you pedantic but yourself. These examples are full of interest, and will make us think for a week."

"Your Bibles," returned the Divine, ("for I

really believe you are not ashamed of your Bibles,) would do it much better; and though, I dare say, I run a risk (looking at Lord Cleveland,) of not being thought of *proper monde*, yet as a poor parson may by just a possibility be forgiven for quoting the Bible, I would venture to remind you of a great man, called Nebuchadnezzar."

"Oh, let's have him by all means," cried Lord Cleveland.

"It will do all over-confident people good," replied Herbert; "yet, it is all comprised in two little verses.

'The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, *by the might of my power and the honour of my majesty?*

'While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven: saying, O! King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, thy kingdom is departed from thee.'"

The party were silent for some time after the Doctor had ended. For, in fact, his example, and his manner of reciting it, had impressed them with something like awe.

"'Tis a memorable lesson," said Lady Clan-

ellan, with great seriousness, "and I am almost ashamed to have treated Lady Constance's fear with so much heedlessness."

"There is another example still," proceeded Herbert, "which though only found in the effusions of poetry, is yet so natural, so approaching to the realities of life, and so beautifully painted, that I own I have often dwelt upon it with a pleasure and awfulness conjoined, that generally overcame me."

The whole party looked eager with inquiry.

"'Tis of Eve," continued the Divine; "poor, weak, but well-intentioned, though over-weening Eve! Who can peruse that anxious portrait of her, falling into the jaws of condemnation and death, in the very moment of her proudest confidence; who, that has loved her before, for her thousand graces, yet sees her cut off in the midst of happiness, but must, as a mere moralizer, feel himself plunged in distress? But who that reads this in the inimitable song that records it, and is not moved to the quick by the pathos of the language, and the fearfulness of the example?" Here Herbert seemed rapt, and then broke out with lines which affected his hearers almost as much as they did himself.

"Oh! much deceiv'd, much failing, hapless Eve,
Of thy presum'd return—event perverse!
Thou never, from that hour, in Paradise,
Found'st either sweet repast, or sound repose;
Such ambush, hid among sweet flow'rs and shades,
Waited, with hellish rancour imminent,
To intercept thy way, and send thee back,
Despoil'd of innocence—of faith—of bliss!"

The subject, the language, and the manner in which this was repeated, here got the better both of the speaker and his audience. Constance, whom they peculiarly affected, from thinking of her impressions the evening before, was moved even to tears; De Vere's heart recoiled within him; and even the Earl reddened, from his better feelings having suddenly mastered him.

But though even *he* felt much the force of sympathy, it too much resembled weakness in his mind, for him not to make an effort to check it. He did himself little good, however, with the natural and unsophisticated Constance, when repressing his feelings he observed, "Your poetry, my dear Doctor, is beautiful; but your reasoning upon all your examples goes no farther than mere conjecture."

"Conjecture!" exclaimed Herbert. "Is it really no more, that there is a Power, invisible

indeed, but certain, who at this moment sees and hears us ?"

"We are going too deep," said Lord Cleveland.

"You did not think so when you hazarded your observation ; for, to come to the conclusion that what we have been speaking of is nothing but conjecture, you must have gone to the very bottom of the subject, and at least settled that our opinion is not capable of proof."

The Earl hesitated.

"Lord Cleveland," said De Vere, "you cannot answer this."

A short silence ensued.

"Come," proceeded Herbert ; "what would you say, if, wherever you turned, whatever you were doing, whatever thinking, in public or private, with a confidential friend telling your secrets, or alone planning them (but especially the latter); if, I say, you actually saw an eye perpetually fixed upon you, from whose watching, though you strove ever so much, you could never escape ?"

"The supposition is awful enough," answered Cleveland : a sentiment which the whole company echoed.

"And even if you closed your own eye to

avoid it," continued the Doctor, "you found that to get rid of it was impossible; that it still stared at you, entered your very brain, and into the region of thought itself."

"I beseech you come to your conclusion," cried Cleveland, "for I don't like the supposition at all, though it is merely visionary."

"Well then," said the Divine, "would you hold that such an eye did not demonstrate that there was personality somewhere (though you could not see the rest of it), to which the eye belonged, and which personality was ever near you? Would it, I say, only be *conjecture* that there was such personality, though all but the eye were invisible?"

"If the supposition were true," answered Cleveland, "I would admit the consequence."

"There *is* such an eye," observed Herbert.

"Yes!" replied Cleveland, trying to be gay; "but only in the Book of Common Prayer. For I now remember it in a picture at the beginning of the service of the fifth of November; and it interested me much as a child, because it was drawn with rays issuing out of it, which discovered the gunpowder plot. But I *was* a child, and only as a child liked and believed it, as other children did."

"Yet the children were right," replied the Divine, "though they might mistake the process of their belief. When grown to men, from seeing their mistake as to this process, and that there is no such real eye visible to their own, they begin to doubt, or feel hard of belief—as some timorous people are valiant after the disappearance of a ghost. Nevertheless the children's is the true account. And I would again ask, if this does not lead to something far deeper than conjecture?"

The conviction of the company left Herbert without an answer.

"I allow, however," continued the President, "it is not common to have these impressions. The soul must be attuned to them in something like abstraction from the business and struggles of the world. In crowds we are too much interrupted; in the race of self-interest, we are too much perverted; in camps we are struggling for life and death; in courts we see none but the eye of a human sovereign. Nevertheless, the Divine eye is always upon us; and whilst we least think of it, is noting all, and, whatever we may think, be assured, will remember all."

Lord Cleveland tried to laugh off the serious-

ness which this occasioned ; and after a few light speeches which did him no good with Constance, observed with raillery, if not with something like a sneer, that no doubt the Divine, who seemed to know so much about it, must, in his secret communings with supernatural power, have seen this eye.

"To say I have seen it visible to sense," replied Herbert, "would not only mock the truth, but my own supposition, which was, that there was no such object operating upon material organs. But these communings are not the less real for all that."

"And you have experienced them?"

"I have; and (laugh as you please) have always felt the better for them."

"Perhaps you have heard voices too?"

"I have!"

"Sounding in your ear?"

"In the ear,—no!"

"In the heart?"

"Yes!—Nor is there any one, I believe, so sophisticated by bad habits, or corroded by worldliness, as not, at one time or other, to have heard the voice of his Maker, in that Maker's inimitable works. It is not the less real, because we know not how it produces its

effects. In this respect, it is like the music of enchantment, which all of you may have admired in the song of that divine man who so well describes it;—music which seems

> 'To breathe
> Above, about, or underneath,
> Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
> Or the unseen genius of the wood.'"

He ceased, and all the party were silent for some minutes. The ideas with which he concluded sank deep into their hearts, and still fascinated their attention. In fact, all were afraid to lose, by interrupting him, whatever farther he might have to say;—and for a while they were lost in mental abstraction.

At length, the President having finally concluded, he received the warm thanks of his little audience for the satisfaction he had afforded them. Constance alone was silent; for her feelings were too deep for utterance: but her looks showed that the obligation was not the less felt, because unexpressed; and when they proceeded with their walk, she found herself, uninvited, putting her arm within Herbert's, in a manner so frank, and at the same time so modest, that whilst it delighted the person whom she so dis-

tinguished, it appeared to please almost all the rest of the party. She gained by it with De Vere, as we hope she will with the reader. For, amongst all the traits of a young and naïve girl, we know none so pleasing as the pleasure she sometimes feels, (and shows she feels,) in a familiar and sanctioned intercourse with a man much her senior, to whose wisdom she defers, and on whose kindness she relies. In this instance, Constance's long acquaintance with Herbert, who had known her from a child, her respect for him, and the obligation he had just seemed to confer upon her, in satisfying her heart on points vital to its happiness, seemed to make this pleasure doubly natural; and her manner of showing it (fresh and charming as her youth) interested all who saw it, and above all, De Vere.

CHAPTER VII.

A MORTIFIED MAN OF QUALITY.

Trust me, I am exceeding weary.
Is it come to that? I had thought weariness durst not have attacked one of so high blood.

SHAKSPEARE.

LORD CLEVELAND was not of a temper, any more than of habits, to be satisfied with the situation in which he was left in the last chapter: for not only he felt he had made no way with Constance during the birth-day, but it was evident that the elder ladies, who had appeared so much his friends at first, were so no longer; and, though for this he would have cared little in itself, yet, as an indication of his position with Constance, it was ruinous to his hopes.

"It is strange," said he to himself, "how fond old people are of interfering with young; and stranger still, how the young will permit it. Let us see, however, whether this sober, serious, fair one, can stand a winter in town."

He then remembered his observations on the masque, evidently overheard by these eternal old ladies, and evidently communicated to Lady Constance, with no good result to the critic. The bard cousin was only in greater favour; and now the good Doctor seemed to have given a finishing blow to Cleveland's morning hopes. For, delighted with the distinction with which his young friend treated him, and being a stout and quick walker, Herbert fairly carried off Constance, far before the rest of the party, to the Dairy-house; nor did the lightness and airiness of her step, or the symmetry and grace which the folds of her drapery, agitated by the breeze, disclosed, at all contribute to deaden the admiration of this once puissant and haughty lord of fashion, whose attention was thought honour by all the rest of the world.

Left behind by the only being whom he sought as a companion, to arrange his feelings, as he might, with persons whom he began to dislike, and almost to hate, his natural moroseness, when thwarted, broke out; and he gave himself twenty times to the devil, for having ever thought of talking divinity with a divine. The effects of this did not soothe him: his brow was knit; his chest swelled; and he strove in

vain to disguise a sense of mortification, (certainly unusual with him,) by humming an Opera tune. At last, finding his good breeding fast fading before his rising anger, he fairly turned round, after falling back a few paces, and without apology or excuse abandoned his company, and sought to restore his happiness among the political friends he had left at the Castle.

And now, let those who had been used to follow this supposed favourite of fortune with admiring (some of them with envious) eyes—let those whose minds, as ill regulated as his own, fancied him the happiest of the happy, because apparently the gayest of the gay—dive if possible into his heart, and there gather the lesson that will or will not do good to their own, by the use they make of it.

Thwarted in his pride as much as in his love, and vexed to the quick from disappointment in both, Cleveland endeavoured to fill himself with contempt for the softer passion, as unworthy the aspirations of a man born for power. In particular, he endeavoured to lash himself into resentment against the soft and pure creature who had, but an hour before, been the object of his most fervent admiration.

In this last attempt he completely failed. It is true, he was indignant at finding his high-sounding name, which had been accustomed to give the law both to men and to women, utterly disregarded; and the offender seemed guilty of little less than treason against the majesty of his reputation. Secretly, therefore, he meditated severe retaliation, both upon her and De Vere, of whom he had become cruelly jealous. But the traitress herself, and all that belonged to her, by which we mean the beautiful train of graces and virtues which every where followed her, had got so deeply into his breast, that no resolve, however proud—no feeling, however indignant—could displace her. Thus, like the giant Polypheme, he felt himself endowed with a strength which, as such, nothing could resist; but which, under his fatal abuse of it, could only terrify and disgust—not win the heart he coveted. Like the same giant, he struggled in vain to quell the rage which tore him, by pondering mischief which might gratify his revenge, but which could not cure his love.

'Twas as a mere momentary diversion that he sought out his political friends, who were all in close divan at the Castle when he joined them; but though he saw them in raised and elated

spirits, his own, to their surprise, were disturbed and sour; and he was in no humour to give them the lights or the hope they expected from him.

'Tis a maxim of La Rochefoucauld, " *Qu'on passe souvent de l'amour à l'ambition, mais on ne revient guères de l'ambition à l'amour;*" and La Rochefoucauld thought at least that he knew something of the heart. But his own Henri IV. might have taught him differently; for while Henri was perhaps the most ambitious monarch in Europe, he was at the *same* time the most ardent lover. Neither Henri Quatre nor Lord Cleveland passed from love to ambition, by way of curing the one by the other.—In the souls of both, each passion reigned triumphant, and in the Earl we have described them as holding a divided empire. Hence, though, as we have stated, he sought in politics a diversion from the mortifications of the morning, he was surprised himself at the little vigour he felt in entering into the reasons for instant departure, which Lord Mowbray and Eustace set before him, founded upon very important letters from town. Nevertheless, by degrees the discussions interested him, and, compared with his immediate struggle,

"With a pleasing sorcery could charm
Pain for awhile or anguish."

That struggle, however, coloured all his deliberations on the question of Lord Oldcastle's requisitions: could his going have mortified Constance he would instantly have set out; but as he felt, with a sigh of affronted pride, that it would be just the most pleasing thing in the world to her, he wished, and almost resolved to stay. He listened, however, to all that was urged (cogently enough) by Lord Oldcastle's letters, as well as by Eustace, to induce him not to be a moment out of the King's sight; or even, if possible, one yard from his elbow, until something was decided on the future ministry.

"And yet," said Cleveland, "I see no reason for leaving the Castle at present. The lion is not dead, though he may sleep; and I have a royal support in my pocket; a support which must bear down every thing that opposes."

"You have not Mr. Wentworth's support," said the young Eustace, who spoke *con amore* the sentiments of his father; "and no one can tell the result of his influence."

"Personally he has none," said Lord Cleveland.

"On the contrary," returned Eustace, "in my

father's own language, all the influence he has is personal. Like the Minister himself, his power depends upon his abilities alone, and great have they made him. Should his continuance or promotion, therefore, be made a stipulation in the closet, who would oppose it?"

"That would I," replied Cleveland, warming; "particularly if his *promotion* were in question, though a question which I do not understand can ever be made."

"It is said," observed Eustace, "he has given out that he will be all or nothing."

"Then shall he be nothing," replied the haughty nobleman, growing warmer and warmer.

Lord Mowbray was uneasy, and observed, how devoutly it were to be wished that Mr. Wentworth and Lord Oldcastle could be brought to act together, for that till that was done, he feared no ministry could be considered on a safe and lasting foundation.

This was a phrase Lord Mowbray was peculiarly fond of, and denoted always in his mind that state of things which he considered as equal to the millennium itself in this world, and for which he possibly would have commuted many of his chances of happiness in the next.

As the question however was of immense consequence, and in that nice and difficult state with which Lord Mowbray's powers were not precisely calculated to deal, he asked leave to call in Mr. Clayton to the council, as a prudent and confidential young man.

This met with a decided negative on the part of Cleveland, and a threat to break off all connexion with Lord Mowbray, if he did not solemnly pledge himself, henceforward to have neither eyes, nor ears, nor speech, except as he, Lord Cleveland, should permit; a pledge which the descendant of the Mowbrays hesitated not a moment to give. The result was, that the political trio should leave the Castle the next day, to provide, as they said, for the exigencies of the state, which might be endangered, if their rival had time to strengthen himself in Cleveland's absence.

Constance was allowed the choice of establishing herself for the winter in town, (for in those days October was ignorantly thought the beginning of winter,) or to remain with her aunt at the Castle. Clayton of course was to accompany his patron; but De Vere being mentioned, a most determined interdict by the all-powerful Minister expectant was put upon any

attempt of his uncle to incorporate him in the party. Lord Mowbray, to give him his due, was certainly not entirely at his ease upon this. It was even said that he looked discontented, and twice essayed to speak, but this was never proved. Lord Eustace, in a better spirit, combated this resolution, as far as a young candidate for power, and determined party man, dared combat any thing with a person who, he thought, was to be the future disposer of his fortune. But Cleveland said he was sick of the very name of De Vere; that he was calculated for nothing but a sour rebel; that there were methodists in politics, as well as in religion; that he was one of them, and would betray, if not ruin, any party to which he might belong.

Eustace reddened, and his heart felt one or two quicker pulses in it at this disparagement of his friend; nor perhaps did he quite give Lord Cleveland credit for being actuated on this occasion solely by solicitude for the common cause. Eustace had, indeed, from nature, much of the honest feelings of his age, nor were they yet cankered with the great passion so far as to make it easy for him to listen quietly to the opinion that coolly attempted to destroy a friend's character, and consign his hopes for

ever to ruin. He, therefore, though with some hesitation, ventured a sort of remonstrance with the Earl, upon a treatment, so unexpected, of a man, who, from his reputation and independent vote, to say nothing of his connexions, might prove a grace to the party.

But Cleveland knew his man; and after giving him, therefore, due credit for his fidelity, calmly asked him if he was prepared to plead for a connexion with a person who had declared to himself he would belong to no party.

Eustace quoted a maxim of his father, that the true way to deal with such men, if they were worth having, was to enlist them into office, though the appointment were ever so small.

In reply, Cleveland desired to know if he would enlist one who favoured the enemy? and then informed him of De Vere's acknowledged predilection for Wentworth. He did not add to the information, De Vere's unhesitating refusal, not many hours before, to accept a great post, the moment he heard that Eustace had claims upon it. The party feeling of the aspiring Eustace was therefore kindled; and in the true legitimate spirit of that feeling, he instantly gave up his friend, without scruple, and almost without regret.

And is it so in the noble career of ambition? And is it thus that a young bosom of five-and-twenty, open, warm, and alive to all generosity of sentiment in other respects, can close upon an early affection, fidelity to which is the very characteristic of its age?

All this? Ay, more! For while it lasts, in the whole range of mental poison, nothing corrodes like party spirit. It seems, by some demoniacal magic, to change our very being; inflames the life blood itself, and penetrates the wholesome system of the patient, who knows not himself while under its influence.

It was this, no doubt, which caused that havoc in the heart and understanding of a man, who, had he lived in gentler times, was made for all the gentler virtues; but who, in a time of terror, became ferocious and strange to his nature, from the influence of this dreadful spirit. Startle not, Reader, when we pronounce the name of William Russel. Formed for all the graces of private life, and full of a high sense of public duty, his amiable and patriotic character was imbued with the brutality of a savage, through the fatal feeling we are describing; and the man who loves him for his goodness, and respects him for his sincerity,

starts from him with horror, when he contemplates him under the goadings of this feeling, not only pursuing an innocent old man to death, but denying, without a colour of reason, the power of the crown to soften the manner of that death into a mere deprivation of life, instead of inflicting it by the most horrible torments.

To a power of causing such shocking transformations, to such poison of the mind, may we not apply what was once so energetically applied to a real poison of the body. "Oh! thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let's call thee Devil."*

* Take a milder, but scarcely less illustrative instance, in Pulteney, who so hated his opponents in the Ministry that he could not bear them to do good.—Writing to Swift, he wishes they would provide for him, "And yet," says he, "methinks, now I consider it, and reflect who they are, *I should be sorry they had the merit of doing so right a thing.* As well as I wish you, I would rather not have you provided for, than provided for by people I don't like." Swift must have been very much obliged to him, and, in truth, it was a very Christian-like spirit! But what says Swift himself, writing in all the dignity of history, or at least of a preface to a history which was to astonish and enlighten the world. "I freely confess, it appear-

De Vere being given up, the Earl, triumphant in his measures, broke up his little council, and felt already the temporary consolation of a ruined mind, in having, as he thought, made one step, at least, towards his revenge. In this temper, on quiting his associates, he fell in with Clayton, exactly as Clayton, who had watched his motions, designed he should fall in with him.

Though in many points the characters of these worthies were as opposite as light and darkness, there were some in which they were disposed to be allied. Each had a spirit of intrigue, and neither was restrained in his intrigues by any very nice sense of honour,

ed *necessary as well as natural* upon such a mighty change, that those who were to be in power upon the succession, and resolved to act in every point by a direct contrary system of politics, "*should load their predecessors with as much infamy as the most inveterate malice and envy could suggest*, or the most stupid ignorance and credulity in the underlings could swallow."—Pref. to Four Last Years of Queen Anne.

Happier time present! when a sense of justice seems to temper the most violent party feeling; and violence itself shows its spirit in fair open conflict; while private ebullitions of envy, much more of malignity, are thought ungentlemanly.

gratitude, or delicacy. At this moment, though from different motives, each was actuated by views not very favourable to the interests of De Vere. The hostility of the Earl was derived from jealousy, and a desire of vengeance, both against him and Constance. Clayton was jealous and revengeful too, but his political views having swallowed up his jealousy with his love, which he saw was hopeless, he cared not for revenge, except as his views of advancement were combined with it. The penetration of Cleveland had discovered many of these views, and his own intrigues in the De Vere borough, had enabled him to detail many of Clayton's projects there. It was convenient to the Lord Cleveland to turn all this to account, and as convenient to Mr. Clayton to allow himself to be so turned. The one satisfied his vengeance, the other his interest. When they met, therefore, the train was laid.

The Earl opened first; and knowing Clayton's passion for familiarity with the great, took him by his weak point, by telling him he was the very man he wanted to see. He then walked him off to a distant part of the park, observing he had much to say to him of a confidential nature; that he was a rising fellow, and had

many useful talents, discretion, and tact; with many other cajoleries of the same intoxicating nature.

Had Cleveland been any thing but a peer, and a king's favourite, Clayton would have instantly suspected this flattery. As it was, his propensity to the confidence of high personages blinded him into the most soothing notions of his own self-consequence, and he felt a sort of elysium at the praises of a man whose sincerity he had too often heard questioned, not to question it himself.

Perhaps the reader would not wish to see unfolded all that passed at this conference; in which, however, it would not be unamusing to detect the skill with which each party endeavoured to sound the other in their respective objects; Cleveland, to ascertain how far he could make Clayton instrumental, either by working on Lord Mowbray, or the parties themselves, in separating De Vere and Constance; Clayton, to gather more exactly than he had hitherto done, what was passing in regard to the expected changes in politics.

But Cleveland's was the master mind; and, without disclosing more than was necessary of his political secret, he succeeded, as he had

often done with others, in fixing Clayton in all his views. The feeling, indeed, of the *parvenu* towards Constance, had long been turning to dislike, from the slights he had met with; and towards De Vere he had just that sort of indefinable ill will, which conscious inferiority of character, and an uneasy sense of obligation, always give to a mind incapable of any sentiment but that of self.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISSIPATION.

She's a most triumphant lady, if report be square with her.
SHAKSPEARE.

It was not long before the seeds sown by Lord Cleveland began to sprout, if not to fructify. Transplanted from the simple pleasures of her Arcadian reign, to preside in the less sequestered, but more brilliant circles of artificial life, Constance was now the companion of her father in London. That is to say, they met (though not always) at breakfast; generally (but by no means always) at dinner; and at great dinners, of which Lord Mowbray gave not a few, she did the honours (for at that epoch ladies did do the honours of their own tables) with admirable grace. She was, of course, surrounded by the *beau monde*, and received homage which might have turned a weaker head, and hardened a heart less modest than her own. But she could not forget the gracious

feelings which had characterized those birth-night emotions we have lately described, and produced a frame of mind for which she had felt the better ever since.

The course of a London life was little friendly to such feelings. She knew this, and lamented it; nor ceased to wonder what it was that rendered her mind less open to impressions, which she here courted too often in vain; while, removed but a hundred miles off, they offered themselves spontaneously, and were welcomed with delight whenever they offered. Why was a town so barren, and woods and fields so fertile, in ideas which seemed to exalt and purify our nature, and bring us closer to nature's God? What was there in a walk in Grosvenor-square, so different from a walk in the groves of Castle Mowbray? What, on the banks of the Thames, so contrasted with the banks of the Dove, that the same individual should not seem the same creature in the one place and in the other?

These are profound questions, affecting the theory of a life in the world, which we dare not attempt to fathom; but which, as they seem to depend upon a particular sort of air, we must leave to physiologists. Though, as humble mo-

ralizers, we might presume to give a reason for them too, but for the fear of those imperial and imperious persons who preside at the head of fashion. Now, every body knows that fashion is confined to London, or, at most, to Chiswick, Roehampton, or Richmond; and these leaders of it, if one ventured to talk of a walk, as we did just now, would exclaim with Millamant,

"I nauseate walking, 'tis a country diversion! I loathe the country, and every thing that relates to it."

Of these persons, we confess our fear—while in town. For remove them but fifty miles, provided it be not to a watering-place, and, if they are not soured or deadened by ennui, they often turn out to be very amiable and even rational persons: and a Countess who has been a fine lady in the one place, has been known to prove a very good sort of woman in the other.

Thus, a lady of high rank and most refined education, has been seen to mask herself in silly exclusiveness during a whole visit, towards one of her father's oldest friends; nor, though acquainted with him herself, has she vouchsafed one single word to him, *in London;* when, to the same person, who did not laugh at her the less for it, when he has visited her in her

remote château, she has been all goodness, smiles, and affability, and has professed how pleasant it was to receive a visit from so old a friend—in the country.

We own this is beyond us exactly to unravel; unless, as has been suspected, there is really something morbid in the air of a London square, (for it does not rage with quite so much violence in the inferior streets,) which affects the mind, as it certainly may the body; but this, as we have said, we leave to the physiologists, not without feeling uneasy, and almost anxious, to think that the inexperienced Constance is about to be exposed to the all-powerful contagion.

For Constance did not shut her eyes to the passing scene. She had a taste for elegance as well as a soul attuned to feeling. She was particularly sensible to refinement of every kind; and, perhaps, was only restrained from carrying it nearly to enthusiasm, by possessing a larger portion of good sense, then almost ever fell to the lot of one of her age.

Yet, of that age she entered into the pleasures, and it must be owned largely, for they courted her on every side. Far from being restrained, she was even encouraged in them by her father; which rather surprised those who

knew how little he cared for them himself. But they did not know, that he had been taught by the Cleveland to turn even his daughter's pleasures to account, in improving his political influence.

"You know not," said the Earl to him, "the inestimable advantage you possess in so powerful a coadjutrix. You may make Mowbray House the centre of all attraction, and it will be your own fault, if you do not convert it into *political* attraction. The young men of consequence will be too happy to lay their parliamentary trophies (and there are few others now-a-days,) at her feet. Her elegance will put any one into fashion, and there are a number of excellent partizans who want to be in fashion, more even than to be popular. These are all certain prey. Let Lady Constance but give them one protecting, much more an encouraging, nod, for being good boys in the House, and you will find your Treasury-bench guarded by a band of Janizaries.

The project pleased. Lady Constance was encouraged by her father to render Mowbray House the focus of elegant pleasure; which, seeing no harm in it, and foreseeing no consequences, she did not oppose. On the con-

trary, it required little argument to persuade a girl still under age, beaming with health and nymph-like with grace, that to give half a dozen balls was a measure both wise and innocent. Nor was there greater difficulty in proving that a fine house ought to be opened to fine people; and that to make it a rendezvous of all that was brilliant in the nation, whether for wit, eloquence, or eminence of any kind, was only suitable to a lady of the condition and endowments of Lord Mowbray's daughter.

Accordingly, in addition to the usual number of fêtes given by a family of their rank, a regular weekly supper was established, on the nights of those days when there had been a drawing-room at Court, to the unspeakable joy of Lady Elizabeth and all the Partridges, as well as Clayton, who never failed in their attendance upon it. The house, also, was thrown open on stated evenings to a select society, (but, particularly, those of any political consequence,) who were sure to find elegant amusement, and what was meant to be agreeable conversation.

These parties (still by Lord Cleveland's advice, though the adviser kept himself concealed from Constance,) were made by degrees more

and more select; so as to be, what, in the present day, would be called, *exclusive*, with the exception of members of parliament and persons of parliamentary influence. Admission to them, therefore, became more and more an object of desire, from difficulty; while the fashion, accomplishments, and beauty, of the Lady Constance, became the theme of every tongue. In short, the politic Earl's plan succeeded, and Lord Mowbray was in ecstasy to think, that to be invited to the suppers or parties of his daughter, was deemed fully equal in itself to the value of a vote upon all difficult questions.

But all this was without the knowledge of her who was the load-star that set every thing in motion; for of the exact views of her father in promoting, and still more of the share which Lord Cleveland had in advising it, she was absolutely unconscious. She only observed, and (for why should we deny it?) her heart dilated with pleasure in doing so, that the *petits soupers*, the music, the foreigners of distinction, and, above all, the party associations to be found in the society of Mowbray House, had become the delight of the *haute noblesse*, and the admiration of all who pretended to be of any fashion in the metropolis.

In effecting this, Lord Mowbray had but a single object: and, as we have seen, was the blind follower of another's genius. But the policy of that other had a double aspect. He had proposed to himself, for reasons which have been glanced at, to plunge Constance into a dangerous dissipation; and he had also observed on the Continent, the powerful influence of female attraction, diffused, as it might be, through a variety of channels, in subserviency to the views of ambition. Both his objects were promoted by the advice he gave to Lord Mowbray. Nor, in respect to politics, let any one think this either out of nature, or unprecedented. To be sure, our downright ancestors seldom gave assemblies. The rivals for power in the state, wrestled for it in the Council-chamber or the Senate, almost as toughly as if really tugging in an arena, like regular Pancratiasts. They had no idea of the influence of a woman's smile, except as it led them to arms and battle. But while the power of the smile continued the same, other roads had been opened to obtain it. The tournament blazed no more; but the palm of eloquence, and the victory in political contest, might still be laid at woman's feet; and lovely woman still excited our youth to exertion,

though of a different nature. How many, indeed, of our struggling statesmen have animated their own prowess, and kept a sometimes vacillating band together by the adroit application of this potent instrument!

In the time we speak of, the enchantress of most power in this respect—she who afterwards so delighted the ear by her accomplishments, and the eye by her manners—she who made her house one glow of fascinating elegance, had not appeared, though she has now sunk from the scene, and left no peer behind. Cold and mouldered are those limbs, and mute that tongue, and glazed that eye, which once dazzled by their grace, won by their sweetness, or kindled by their lustre. But the exciting instrument of party even now remains; and is still used, even in this matter-of-fact age, when, either from the changed hearts of the men, or the inferior powers of the women, it has lost much of its influence.

But at the epoch we are commemorating, Constance, though only a morning star which preceded suns in full glory, was already gazed at with fervour; and the adroit Lord Cleveland, while he worshipped this brilliant star himself, converted its brilliancy skilfully to his

purpose with others. In doing this, however, he had another and still deeper view than even to serve his ambition. By abstracting Constance (through the seductive amusements, and the flattery or self-consequence which we have mentioned) from that serious and reflective disposition which was always his enemy, he thought he might remove a powerful bar to his own still unabandoned wishes. He might even rid himself of the most powerful obstacle of all; for such, Clayton had confirmed him in fearing De Vere to be.

"If I can but make her thoroughly dissipated," said he to himself, "De Vere will fly."

With this charitable view, he watched every movement at Mowbray House, and, always out of sight as a director, though always present as a spectator, the wheel went round for some time as he wished, and Constance had nearly been (we will not say lost, but) made giddy by its whirl.

It was not that her heart was at all changed by the excitements or the tumult of her life; it was not that she had become incapable of those lovely emotions which had so endeared her to those who knew and honoured her

most: but, like the bewildered Rinaldo, she felt the influence of an enchanted garden; and so rapid was the vortex in which she found herself involved, that she had not time to be the Constance of the retirement, nor even of the revelries of Castle Mowbray, whom De Vere had so adored.

If any one wonder at this, after all that has been said of her, my only answer is, that Constance was a human creature, not one-and-twenty years of age, surrounded by admirers of every kind; some of them paying court to her rank, some to her elegance, many to her gaiety, all to her beauty. The old approved her dignity; the high, her refinement; the young, her cheerfulness; the gay, her taste for pleasure. Wherever she trod, flowers seemed to spring under her feet, and whichever way she turned, she was garlanded with admiration. Her presence thus diffusing happiness, and her every movement commanding applause, what wonder then, if her heart should for awhile have nearly forgotten its sobriety, or that she should drink (some might say largely) of the cup of pleasure thus presented to her! On the other hand, there was no restraint on any part of her conduct; no monitress but her own

bosom; while some very high dames, friends of Lord Cleveland, devotees of this world, and reckless of another, urged on her career by the most assailing flatteries.

This did not hurt her; but, left to herself, the danger was nearer home. For the reflective habit which Cleveland most feared, fell by degrees, at least into disuse; and she saw no harm in the temporary splendour of her life, because, knowing it had nothing to do with mind, she had resolved it should *be* but temporary.

Thus surrounded, thus plunged, Lord Cleveland deemed her already in the toils; and as London pleasures were his element, in which, to say the truth, he was by all considered as the *Arbiter elegantiarum*, he shone in his element, as other spirits shine. We must not be surprised, then, at the reports which daily gained ground, that the great Lord Cleveland and the beautiful heiress were soon to be united.

Mere report, however, did not satisfy many of those who fluttered about her; eminently, among the rest, the young Duke of Bellamont. Undaunted by the reputation, and, what is more, the alleged success of Lord Cleveland,

he resolved to take neither report nor denial, except from the lady's father, or herself. To the former he opened his pretensions in form; to the latter he strove (and seemed to succeed) to make himself agreeable, by those attentions which, from one of his rank, youth, and real accomplishments, can never be regarded but with complacency by any well-bred female, whatever the result.

This filled Lord Cleveland with alarm: he even feared Lord Mowbray's fidelity. But he feared the lady more; for the Duke was the flower of the Court. Cleveland therefore redoubled his attentions; assumed the guise of a lover broke down with despair; talked of Lord Mowbray as a future Secretary of State; and every where watched Constance with the most keen anxiety.

And did no one else watch her? And had no one besides, observed her through the career we have been describing? Yes! and with an attention, though with very different motives, at least equal to that of Lord Cleveland. In fact, it is not easy to describe the intense, and almost painful interest with which De Vere now observed his cousin.

On their first arrival in London, he had not

been surprised at, he had even promoted, that moderate dissipation, if it may be so called, which is not merely agreeable, but is sometimes even held to be salutary to those who have been much secluded. But when he found the whirl increase, without any great reluctance; when the revelry seemed to proceed upon system, and even assumed to be a sort of principle, he was startled, uneasy, and (as he said, without any right to be so) displeased. His heart, indeed, felt with pleasure the universal admiration which was paid to Constance; and he was not devoid of pride, when he saw the consequence, which, without intending, and almost without knowing it, she had communicated to her father in his party views. The wavering opinion of many a young man had been often fixed by a dinner or ball at Mowbray House; and that dinner or ball had been gladly accepted, because of the syren attraction of the beautiful hostess. With his own feelings, he could scarcely wonder at this.

Nor was the influence confined to politics, to subjects, to one sex, or one nation. The Sovereign and his Queen had talked of the grace of Constance, and had spoken of her as a favourite; and ladies who themselves were at the supreme

head of society, were therefore emulous to have her as the partner of their reign. Foreigners who were at the head of Europe, and with whom, from her residence abroad, she felt much at her ease, proclaimed her the jewel of England. It was treason for them to depart the kingdom without having seen and conversed with her. Even the literati, as well as the dilettanti of the day, sought her auspices; and to behold her, as she sometimes was, surrounded by them, one would have supposed her either actually, or in danger of becoming, that anomalous character—a woman of letters. But she never forgot her sex; and it was only in carrying the graces of that sex to their height, that during the whole winter she was considered the queen of refinement, and that ornament of the Court, and of the world, which all who had known her (De Vere among them) had prognosticated she would be.

"But though she be, and deserve to be, all this," said De Vere, "is her life the life she loves? Is it her choice? Is she happy? If she is, then all my dreams farewell!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUERADE.

What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

SHAKSPEARE.

THE decided character of De Vere, bore him up under the bitterest disappointment his young life had yet experienced. His love for his cousin had been by far the strongest passion hitherto of his heart; far stronger, as we have seen, than such ambition as had been kindled in it, more by sympathy and persuasion than by nature. That love had been opposed by honour; efficaciously opposed, as to any outward manifestation of it, but vainly as to the feeling itself. Indeed, as long as he retired before rivals of higher consequence, he thought he had performed his duty; and had acquired the right, if he pleased, of nursing in secret those feelings, which nothing, or at least no thought

of their imprudence, can deprive of their sweetness, and on which the soul sometimes loves to dwell, spite of hopelessness itself.

But hope, as we may remember, was De Vere's mistress; and, as in his enthusiasm he asserted, she gave him more happiness unenjoyed, than success itself.* But this was before he had seen Constance. His creed, therefore, was now put to the test; for not only had he the pretensions of a still more powerful rival than Cleveland to fear, in the person of the Duke of Bellamont, but he had his own reflections upon the changed disposition, as he thought it, of Constance herself, to silence, ere he could continue to nourish his heart with that sweet food ever so grateful to it. "I have watched her," said he, "anxiously, painfully, in this her new sphere; and I can detect no change of character, not even a lurking vanity, which once admitted, the mine of ruin is sprung, and she is the charming Constance no more. But no! it is impossible this life can be her choice!"

In a moment like this, he was once greeted by Clayton, who, perceiving the state of his feel-

* See Vol. I. his Letter to Herbert.

ings, did not fail to express his own astonishment also at the seeming power of the world over so unsophisticated a being. "Refinement, luxury, and a Duke, however," said Clayton, "may work strange metamorphoses."

De Vere changed colour at this coincidence of their thoughts; and Clayton, not without observing this effect, told him to watch the truth of his observation that night at a masquerade given by the Duke, at Bellamont-House; expressly, as asserted by all the town, for the Lady Constance.

'Twas a magnificent entertainment, furnished forth with all that could be supplied by the resources of England, or the taste of France. But I will not busy myself with golden descriptions of the grandeur of a Ducal house, or the glittering dazzle of ducal company; for amid the glare of costly furniture, the blazing of diamonds, and the gaiety of dresses, which seemed to have been dipped in the colours of the rainbow, nothing struck or interested more than the most simple, and least costly of all the objects that challenged observation. This was the compartments of a chalked floor in the ball room, full of elegant emblems, but round every one of which, in large letters, was the motto of "*Pour Elle.*"

The superiority of mental curiosity over the mere dazzling of sense, was never more exemplified than by this; for while gold, crystal, and tortoiseshell, bronze and china, painting and enamel, courted the eye in vain, all eyes were fixed, and all minds at work, in discussing the meaning, and the person meant, by this portentous motto.

The heart of De Vere was at no loss to discover it; but his curiosity was outstretched to observe its effect upon her, for whom he thought it designed. Lord Cleveland indeed, pronounced that it was for another great lady of the Court, and so ushered it to the notice of Constance, who though masked, and humbled into a Tyrolese peasant, could not deceive his practised penetration. De Vere, concealed by his dress, watched the effect of the intimation, which in truth was only important from its being believed in all simplicity, by the unpretending Constance; and this gave him some comfort. But to this there was an end, when Lady Clanellan, Constance's chaperon, who had left her for a moment, coming up, observed with seeming satisfaction, "The whole world say it is you."

The eye of De Vere was fixed upon Con-

stance, and he was by no means relieved by observing from her manner, that she seemed greatly agitated by the intimation.

But the maskers now thronged the enchanted palace, (for so, while masking went on, it seemed,) and a variety of interests were excited by the various characters that courted observation. Among these a smooth tongued Comus was conspicuous for his wand, his cup, and his pleasing enunciation. Constance, whom he singled out, seemed the sole object of his pursuit. He noticed pointedly, but not coarsely, her pre-eminence in beauty, her former seclusion, and the hopes of the world that she would now continue among them, and never again think of the rusticity of her former life. He noticed too the still preserved simplicity of her dress, and advised her to change it for one like that of a beautiful sultana, who was glittering near her, and whom an ancient hermit had called in her hearing, one of "the gay motes that people the sun-beams."

Constance would have retired, uncomfortable at being made the object of so much attention, but he pursued her, and after advising her to bestow herself upon some prince of the Court, in appropriate strain addressed her thus:—

"List, lady, be not coy.
Beauty is Nature's coin—must not be hoarded;
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose,
It withers on the stock with languished head."

Here Constance sought to escape; but she could not make her way through the crowd, and the pitiless enchanter went on—

"Coarse complexions,
And cheeks of sorry grain, will serve to ply
The sampler;
What need a vermeil tinctured lip for that?
Love darting eyes, and tresses like the morn?"

Here he presented his cup, and all within hearing of his address, were so pleased with the grace of his action, and the emphasis with which he had spoken, that their pleasure showed itself in a burst of applause. But it was an applause distressing to the object who had prompted his exertion, and who with some difficulty and evident displeasure, at length broke, as she hoped, from his spells.

But it was only for a moment; for, encountering her again, he snatched one of the roses from the chaplet which crowned her temples, and scattering its leaves at her feet, changed his lay, and thus went on—

"So passeth, in the passing of a day,
Of mortal life, the leaf, the bud, the flower;
Ne more doth flourish after first decay,
That erst was sought to deck both bed and bower;
Gather, therefore, the rose, while yet 'tis prime,
For soon comes age that will her pride deflower;
Gather the rose of love while yet 'tis time."

The enchanter then unbound his chaplet, which he presented to her; but it was instantly seized by the ancient hermit we before mentioned, who had eyed the whole scene, and exclaimed—

"Avaunt, seducer! foul son of guilt and pleasure!" but, to Constance's annoyance, she was not released by her deliverer from the notice of the by-standers, who seemed only more interested by the address of the hermit himself. He too told Constance he would present her with roses; and selecting first a modest opening bud, and then a flaunting full-blown flower from the chaplet, he addressed her in the same stanza as the enchanter—

"Ah! see who such fair thing doth fain to see,
In springing flowre the image of thy day;
Ah! see the virgin rose, how sweetly she
Doth first peep forth with bashful modestie,
That fairer seems, the less ye see her may."

Great stress was laid by the hermit on this last line; when dropping the bud, and presenting the blown-rose, he went on—

> "Lo! see soon after, how more bold and free,
> Her bared bosome she doth broad display;
> Lo! see soon after, how she fades, and falls away!"

At this conclusion, the rose fell from his hand, and was trodden under foot.

With all her self-possession, the delicate Constance felt this address, and the innuendo it seemed to convey, even more than the direct persuasions of Comus. She experienced, indeed, no little indignation at being thus accosted; but she also felt something very like shame, which, as she reflected on it, amounted even to grief. She perceived she was the gaze of the public eye, and feared she might be the theme of the public scrutiny. She was frightened, and displeased, both with herself and others; and, at any rate, thought unwarrantable liberties had been taken with her by whoever represented Comus, and even still more by the hermit.

As Lord Cleveland, who had been in a domino, had disappeared, she at first suspected him of being the enchanter; but this the youthful

figure, mien and voice of the mask forbade; and for the Duke—she hoped it was not he; for she felt the whole thing an absolute insult. Then as to the hermit! it was a worse consideration still; for in truth, his remonstrances were less bearable than the other's advice. Ah! if it could be Mortimer! that Mortimer whom she had often observed watching her with anxiety, but with whom she had lately had but little of their former confidential intercourse. "Ah! no!" said she, "it cannot be;—he never would be so disrespectful—he would have counselled me in private."

Yet neither the Duke, nor De Vere appeared in any recognizable character, and suspicion at last got such strong hold on her, and with an impression so sickening, that she felt dispirited, and really ill. Through the aid of Lady Clanellan therefore, who, though her chaperon, had not hitherto been able to defend her, she made her retreat good at an hour far earlier than any of the rest of the company; for her *pendule* had only struck one, as she entered her chamber for the night. Here, throwing herself into a chair, far other reflections assailed her than those we have recorded on her birthnight. They were not indeed altogether of a different nature;

but they were more distressing, because attended with less comfort. Moreover, she had no Herbert to instruct her; no Lady Eleanor to advise with; and as for Mortimer, their way of life had long prevented all private communication between them. She dreaded being changed, and would have given the world had the world charmed her less than it appeared to have done.

In this situation she was disposed to any thing rather than sleep; nor did she even court it by the customary appliances; for, far from thinking of bed, but contenting herself with throwing off her dress, which, simple as it was, seemed the livery of a dissipation she regretted, she passed half the remainder of the night, lost in her reflections.

Those reflections were not happy; for after severely taxing her heart with many things, which, though of no very deep die, seemed to press heavily upon it, she confessed the inefficacy of her present life to give her the contentment, for which alone she appeared formed. "I am indeed," said she, "one of the gay motes that people the sun beams," and like them deserve no better than to be dispersed by any passing breath. Liberties have been taken

with me; I have been held up to public criticism,—and whom have I to blame?"

She then again returned to an uneasy question as to the persons who could have so unwarrantably exposed her to public attention, by addresses which, even if uttered in private, had been by no means agreeable to her. The loftier part of her character here showed itself; and whether the maskers of whose intrusion she complained, were friends of the Duke of Bellamont, or if one of them was the Duke himself, a sort of hauteur took possession of her, and she considered the whole affair as an affront to her delicacy, which she felt called upon to mark with displeasure. "The higher the rank," said she, "the greater the necessity for not letting it pass unregarded." Then softening into those more tender and humbler feelings, which always rendered her so touching; "Alas!" thought she, "what right have I to be angry, who have myself so much to repent, so much to be pardoned? If we are all extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it?"

With these reflections, her feeling upon the recent disrespect, as she could not help considering it, lost every thing there was of a haughty character about it, and for awhile she was alive

only to her own thoughtless conduct, in having encouraged these liberties by the dissipation of her life. "Were this to go on," continued she, much agitated, "to what might it not lead?" Then hastily running over her career, from the time she had left the peaceful precincts of Castle Mowbray, she felt tremblingly obliged to confess that, amidst much seeming pleasure, she had scarcely enjoyed one self-approving hour, since she had exchanged her rural reign, for her thronged temple in the midst of the world. Nevertheless, this compunction, sincere as it was, seemed no excuse for the Duke or his Hermit. "I may lose credit with myself," said she, "but it is not for others to show me I have done so;" and this produced a resolution, if her suspicions were proved upon the Duke, to show her sense of it by a determined alteration of behaviour. Proof was not long wanting, for the actor of so conspicuous a part could not be concealed. Her sense of the liberty was marked, accordingly, by a coldness in her manner towards the Duke, which, though never ungentle, was always, from that time forth, too reserved and dignified to give the smallest encouragement to his hopes. As to the Hermit, she was in some measure relieved by discover-

ing, through Mortimer himself, whom she had at first feared, that Harclai, who was in town, had been the person who had so annoyed her. She resolved at least to profit by the lesson; for though she found herself so plunged in dissipation that it was not easy suddenly to recede from it, the little satisfaction her self-examinations gave her, could only find relief from other and better resolutions. These, she hoped, would restore her to that self-respect, without which, the simplest daughter of humble life may be an object of envy to a queen.

CHAPTER X.

POLITICAL EXPECTATION.

Who are the violets now,
That strew the green lap of the new come Spring?
SHAKSPEARE.

For the sake of pursuing the history of Constance in her new life without interruption, we stopped the current of general events, which yet, in other respects, had been most important to all the actors in our story. These events concurred powerfully, with other motives emanating from all we have just related in connexion with his cousin, to affect the conduct of De Vere, both in regard to his ambition and his love.

Upon the arrival of the Castle party in town, their whole attention was occupied with what occupied every body, the expected dereliction of power by the Minister. But the plans laid by Lord Cleveland and his allies gave that band of party associates peculiar and incessant employment.

De Vere was, as may be supposed, excluded from these councils.

But the looked-for resignation did not so immediately take place as was expected; there was even a talk of a continuance in power; and men were still at sea, without guide or compass for their future course, which lay among too many quicksands not to make it both doubtful and dangerous.

It is in such times that the general spectator of human nature, as well as the politician, finds peculiar play for observation. The faces of expectants presented every where that absorbed, hesitating, and anxious aspect, which characterizes a state of uncertainty and suspense. It was like the dreadful moment previous to the first onset of battle, in which all but men of true fortitude cower at the approaching danger. No one seemed decided; every thing was balanced; all were afraid to move, for fear of moving wrong. There was a silence, which was any thing but a calm; it was the silence that precedes thunder.

De Vere, to whom all this was new, was peculiarly struck with it. He observed upon it to Eustace, who, however, was remarkably close, and did not now, as he had been wont, engage

freely with him in political discussion. He applied also to Clayton, who, from Parliament having met, where he still held his seat, was likely to know what was going on. But he only shook his head, as if uneasy; though he also shrugged his shoulders, as if ignorant. Lord Mowbray, too, gave evident signs that things were not right; and the meetings between him and Lord Cleveland, though frequent, did not seem to end with their usual complacency.

After one of his returns, indeed, from the palace, on which occasion Lord Cleveland appeared peculiarly dark, and even agitated (a thing unusual with him), it was observed that there was an obvious change in Lord Mowbray towards him, although the magnet of the drawing-room still drew him to Mowbray House as much as ever.

A change of company, too, was seen there; for the invitations of its beautiful mistress were not confined, as at first they had been, to the particular friends of Lords Cleveland and Oldcastle. Nay, to the surprise of both, they not unfrequently met in the saloon of Lady Constance, not merely Mr. Wentworth's friends, but Mr. Wentworth himself.

In truth, this was a great joy to De Vere,

to whom this minister, from sincere esteem, if not from other causes, seemed to pay particular attention, which did not escape the notice of his uncle, and still less of his satellite, Clayton. What De Vere liked almost as much, was to see the gay welcome which Lord Oldcastle, who was of a smooth, open front, always gave to his colleague at these meetings; though the latter, who was of a more marked and decided countenance, did not unbend in an equal degree. "It is impossible, however," said De Vere, "that with such a felicitous and unconstrained manner, Lord Oldcastle can ever personally seek the downfal of his brother minister.

In his uncertainties, not able to gather more from any body than that all was uncertain, and that nobody knew who were together, still less who was to form the expected new government, he resolved to seek out his old experienced acquaintance, Sir William Flowerdale, who, it may be remembered, had given him much help towards forming a proper estimate of official character and political consequence.

De Vere found the Baronet as kindly disposed as ever; though he approached the subject with evident caution, and at first with unwillingness.

"The time is perilous," said the sage, "to all office-men, and particularly to little office-men. I am not, therefore, surprised at Lord Eustace or Mr. Clayton being afraid to commit themselves."

"I wanted no committal," replied De Vere, "I asked only news."

"To hazard news," returned the Nestor, "is sometimes to express an opinion, or at least a bias, which is the same thing; and there is no saying to what severity of punishment such indications may be exposed, if what is hazarded turns out not to be right. There are times when a smile is dangerous; and a visit, or a walk, arm-in-arm, though the most distant from political intimacy, nay, the most chance thing in the world may be absolute destruction."

"This is astonishing," cried De Vere; "and I therefore despair of information, which, I see, I ought not to ask."

"You are pretty safe," returned Sir William, "as to information, for I am really ignoramus."

"As to opinion, then?"

"That I have no right to form."

"But you do form it; and are qualified to do so."

"What would you ask me?" said the Baronet, gravely.

"Only the little fact," returned De Vere, laughingly, "whether, and when, the Premier will resign, and who is to succeed him?"

"A little fact, indeed," replied Flowerdale; "all the world, however, say Lord Cleveland."

"And is all the world right?"

The man of experience became graver and graver, and at last observed—

> "Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ
> Tractas."

Won, afterwards, by De Vere's manner, esteeming his character and interested for his success, he at last lent himself to his wish, in discussing the question without constraint: in the course of which discussion, his young friend was astonished to learn that the notion of Lord Cleveland's succession had lately lost ground; that, from the discovery of certain private vices, his favour had even declined; and that, at any rate, he had been told that if in the ministry at all, he must resign all pretensions to be Premier.

"He will never be any other," said De Vere.

"So, from his character, I should suppose," answered Flowerdale. "Still, however, Lord Cleveland has immense power and connexions; and the consequent struggle, should the minis-

ter now resign, will convulse the government, and make many a change in private friendships."

"And yet, how firm and knit together they once seemed, and how all-commanding the present minister," said De Vere; "one would suppose that his great character and services would still enable him to influence events."

"He has not a friend in the world," observed Flowerdale.

De Vere was thunderstruck.

"Not one," continued Sir William; "with all his power and grandeur of character, the pride and haughtiness of his manner attached nobody to his person. He seemed even indifferent about making a friend; an art in which Mr. Wentworth, almost without an effort, beats him out of the field. Indeed, the Premier seemed always to despise it; for, trusting solely to his known views, his love of glory and integrity, for support, while he obtained *that*, he left others to seek out patrons, and even rewards for services, where they could. He now finds that friends cannot be made by character and glory alone; and, though once the idol of England, that it is possible for even a patriotic minister to have lived too long."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed De Vere, "that this should be true!"

"Nothing more so, I assure you," replied the Mentor, "and although all men confess the obligations the country is under to him; though there is still a lustre about his name which cannot easily be extinguished; all men are tired of him."

"And yet," said De Vere, "his name is still every where mentioned as if it were sacred."

"Every where in public, I grant you," replied the Mentor, "for we are ashamed not to appear to revere him. But those who are behind the scenes know how all that is. In truth, the greatness he formerly acquired is what he is now living upon. But his glory is eclipsed; he is almost useless from ill health; he can no longer intimidate, or persuade, or in any way manage a party. The great persons who supported were almost always jealous of him; and, as I have told you, so careless has he been of the art of attaching men to his person, that he has scarcely a follower, much less a friend."

"You explain this much too well," said De

Vere, "for I am even shocked to think that this may be the end of—"

"Ambition," said Sir William, finishing the sentence. "Be that as it may, all men, or, at least, all office-men, since Lord Cleveland's disappointment, are speculating upon another successor. You have, no doubt, heard your uncle talk of Mr. Wentworth as most likely to be the person."

"Nay, for once, I can correct *you*," replied De Vere; "for every thing about my uncle proves that he is united in the closest manner with Lord Oldcastle."

Sir William smiled, and looked a mild dissent, but said nothing.

"You do not doubt this!" cried De Vere.

"I ought not, you saying it," answered Flowerdale, "and I suppose, therefore, the reports I have heard are not true. Yet I have seen his name in the lists handed secretly about, of those who will support Mr. Wentworth in the way of party, and of course go out with him in the event that he does not attain his object."

"Lord Mowbray go out!" echoed De Vere.

Flowderdale again smiled.

"This is astonishing every way," continued

De Vere. "Lord Oldcastle then is abandoned, and therefore Lord Cleveland!"

"The last does not follow," said Sir William.

"I am more and more bewildered," cried De Vere. "But pray explain."

"Lord Cleveland may act with Mr. Wentworth, you know, as well as Lord Mowbray."

"What! after,—" but here De Vere checked himself: he then asked what had occasioned the rupture between his uncle and Lord Oldcastle, "For which," said he, "I do hope there is, at least, cogent reason."

"Lord Mowbray," observed Flowerdale, "has always been for a strong government, and Mr. Wentworth, and Lord Cleveland are, in his mind, more likely to make one than Lord Oldcastle."

"Oh! flattering unction!" exclaimed De Vere; "and have two little, little months produced all this!"

"Nay!" said the experienced Flowerdale, "we are not to blame without examination. The alliance to which I perceive you allude, was only planned under presumed circumstances; which, not being accomplished, all parties are free. Depend upon it, there have

been, and will be, many more extravagant coalitions, and many more violent breaches of them, than this, though it seems so strongly to move your indignation."

"I am sorry for it," answered De Vere, thoughtfully. "Yet, to hear them in Parliament, or see them in private, that these two ministers should ever separate!!"

"My good young friend," said Flowerdale, calmly, "you have, I see, much to learn. Yet the experienced Swift, at a much more advanced age, was quite as sanguine, and quite as disappointed."

"Your allusion?" said De Vere.

"'Tis here," answered the Baronet, opening a volume which De Vere had found him perusing when he arrived. It was the Inquiry into the behaviour of Queen Anne's last Ministry, and Flowerdale went on. "The crisis of the times had made me consider and compare them with other periods, and I was busy only the minute before you came in with a passage which gave me, I assure you, much food for reflection."

So saying, he read, "There could hardly be a firmer friendship in appearance, than what I observed between those three great men, who

were then chiefly trusted. I mean, the Lords Oxford, Bolingbroke, and Harcourt. I remember, in the infancy of their power, being at the table of the first, where they were all met, I could not forbear taking notice of the great affection which they bore to each other; and said, I would venture to prophecy, that however inconstant our Court had hitherto been, their ministry would certainly last, principally, because I observed they heartily loved one another, and I did not see how their kindness could be disturbed by competition, since each seemed contented with his own district. So that, notwithstanding the old maxim, which pronounceth Court friendships to be of no long duration, *I was confident their's would last as long as their lives.* But it seems, the inventor of that maxim happened to be a little wiser than I, who lived to see this friendship *first degenerate into indifference and suspicion, and thence corrupt into the greatest animosity and hatred*, contrary to all appearances, and much to the discredit of me and my sagacity."

"All this, however," said Flowerdale, "is a tale of other times, which I have revived, merely to show you what ambition *may* do with the human heart. As to the present state

of things, I have told you, that the Premier has found at last, that a minister can live too long. And I wish Mr. Wentworth may not find, notwithstanding the support of your uncle and Lord Cleveland, that it may be possible to reign in men's hearts and wishes, and to command the applause of senates, yet not to command their votes."

"My uncle and Lord Cleveland's support is an enigma which I must unravel ere I sleep," said De Vere; and thanking Flowerdale for his confidence, he took his leave.

CHAPTER XI.

A FRACAS.

Of what kind should this cock come of?

SHAKSPEARE.

FAR from unravelling the enigma, fresh difficulties arose, which excited the spirit of De Vere still more.

On leaving the sage of office, he encountered his uncle, who having business at the office of the Premier, sent in his name to Mr. Grantley, who, we may remember, had so moved De Vere's pride in a former chapter, and from whom Lord Mowbray expected instant admittance. But to his great annoyance, (as De Vere was with him,) as well as to De Vere's own astonishment, no haste was made to comply with his expectation.

'Tis true, there were people there before him; but the confident made little effort to dismiss them, or in any way to save a person of Lord Mowbray's rank and situation the trouble of

waiting; and as there was no ante-chamber, he was left to consume the time in the common lobby among the messengers.

De Vere was struck with the disrespect, and not a little surprised at the equanimity with which it was borne.

"These people," said Lord Mowbray, "are come to the minister upon some matter of importance. I will take a newspaper, and wait in Mr. Betterton's snug room till I can be received."

So saying, though naturally proud, like a well-disciplined orderly, he took up his abode in the closet of a clerk, till it was convenient to see him.

Not so De Vere, who paced the dark and gloomy passages in no very patient mood, wondering how this trial of dependance (for so he thought it) was to end. Now the confident's door was a-jar, (a dangerous thing for a confident's door to be,) and we may judge De Vere's astonishment when he heard his uncle mentioned by name, and in such terms as the following, by Mr. Grantley:

"Oh! never mind him; he is the greatest nuisance on earth, and so I know the minister thinks him: he can easily wait, for he loves his place too well to be affronted."

"He gives you a cursed deal of trouble," observed Grantley's companion.

"More by half than he is worth," replied Grantley himself; "for we feel him a millstone about our necks."

A laugh followed, and the laugh and the speeches went deep into the heart of De Vere. A thunderbolt could scarcely have astounded him more, and he flung away from the office, without staying to inform or take leave of his uncle, whom he thought of with mingled feelings of pity and disgust.

"Is it possible," said he, "that the Lord of Castle Mowbray is come to this? A feeble, willing slave, not to a minister, but to a satellite; a major-domo, who depends upon his master's breath for existence,—who may be worshipped to-day, or crushed to-morrow; and yet is able to hold a peer of the realm in such vile and degrading dependance. Alas! what is become of the blood of the Mowbrays? what of the father of the high-minded Constance? Ah! Talbois! my loved forest retreat, where I have wandered without danger of affront, how much sweeter would be poverty with thee, than all the sweets of office coupled with such dependance!"

With this he wandered into the park, to breathe more freely, meaning to return to his uncle, to inform him of the affront. But when he returned, his uncle was gone. As a dernier resource, he hastened back to Sir William, whose house was at hand, and, informing him of the circumstance, abruptly asked him if his uncle ought not to resign.

"What," said the cautious official, "before he has even complained to the master, of the impertinence of the man?"

Now, perhaps the good Sir William felt as Lord North did in after-times, and did not comprehend the dignity of resigning. He at least thought Lord Mowbray would not do so; and so he told his nephew.

"Yet there have been such things," said De Vere.

"Talked of," answered Sir William, "but the practice is different. Assure yourself, however, that the Premier ought to bear no part of your blame. There is an uprightness about him, which would never let him think of such a conduct, and a greatness which could not stoop to it, if he did. I can answer for it, he would be sore displeased if he knew it. But, at any rate, your uncle does not complain."

"He does not know the insult," cried De Vere.

"My good young friend," replied Sir William, "do not let us be too sure that he would resent it, if he did."

De Vere absolutely stared, and looked almost displeased at his adviser.

"In Ireland," said he, "I have heard that a Lord Lieutenant himself has been called to the field, for even not immediately seeing a nobleman who had waited upon him."

"We cannot," said Flowerdale, smiling, "in this more prudent climate of our's, reason upon the maxims of our warm-hearted neighbours. What I mean is, that Lord Mowbray is too experienced a man of business, to let it be interrupted by the mere flippancy of an inferior person who has forgotten himself."

"But Mr. Grantley, in one sense, is scarcely his inferior, and must speak the mind of his superiors. I shall certainly feel wanting to my uncle, and even to myself, if I do not inform him."

"Shall I tell you honestly," said Flowerdale, "what will happen? He will not thank you."

"What! not for giving him an opportunity of asserting his honour!"

" At present," returned Flowerdale, " he knows not that it is injured; and you will only involve him in a most uneasy dilemma by informing him."

" Why ?"

" He must either make the thing personal in the Irish way you talk of, which, I suppose, you do not mean—"

" Certainly not."

" Or insist upon Mr. Grantley's being dismissed, which is, probably, what you do mean."

" It is."

" It is this, then, for which he will not thank you ; for a Prime-minister's confident is not so easily removed."

" I would then remove myself," cried De Vere.

" That would be the worst of all," returned Flowerdale. " But it seems you know not how Christian and forgiving we inferior placemen sometimes are; insomuch, that Dryden, as I believe it is, says, ' Politicians neither love nor hate.' But you have, as I have told you, much to learn."

" It seems so," answered De Vere; " but I must learn much, indeed, before I submit to withhold this affront from the Earl of Mow-

bray, let him deal with it as he may." Upon this he left the experienced and mild-minded Baronet, and was only deterred from urging his uncle to take instant vengeance on the offensive Grantley, by the new and important events which had by this time occurred.

CHAPTER XII.

SOUNDING.

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar.

SHAKSPEARE.

Mr. Grantley not *being able to see* Lord Mowbray when he called, received, soon afterwards, a visit from Clayton.

It was a visit which Clayton was fond of paying, for they were kindred spirits. The success and influence of Mr. Grantley at head-quarters, had, indeed, become the object of Mr. Clayton's fondest admiration.

Mr. Grantley, however, had not yet sufficiently fathomed the mind and heart of his admirer, to open himself much to him. The confident of Lord Mowbray was not in too good odour with him; and, as Clayton was known to owe his introduction to the official world entirely to De Vere, the visit was, just at that moment, from political circumstances, not pe-

culiarly agreeable. But Mr. Grantley had seen and observed enough of the *parvenu*, to be above fearing his visit, on account of any very devoted attachment which he might be supposed to owe to his early friend; and a very few words brought the two gentlemen to a right understanding with one another on this point.

Mr. Clayton, in fact, opened the conference, by lamenting the impracticable, and, as he called it, the moody nature of a man he so much loved as De Vere.

"I have observed it," said Grantley, "and would not have him show this spirit towards the Minister, or in Parliament, for the world."

"To tell you the truth, his uncle fears it as much as *we* do, and it is for this purpose I have waited upon you, by his desire; for the time is come when in honour I ought to vacate the seat which I only hold for Mr. De Vere as rightful possessor—if, indeed, he at present is rightful possessor."

The Minister's minister caught at this speech, and listened with greedy interest to what followed of the reported spirit in the borough; a spirit which (if even the report was correct) he had too much penetration not to perceive had been fostered, if not generated, by Clayton

himself: he, however, complimented him upon his ability, as well as commended him for his constancy to what he called his *early friendships*, and agreed with him in being sorry to think, that to vacate under such circumstances might be dangerous. The difficulty, however, was how to dispose De Vere not to come in.

It was to this that Clayton precisely wished to bring the confident, and then, seeing every thing exactly ripe, he mentioned the thought which Lord Mowbray, he said, had first conceived, to embark De Vere in diplomacy, which might give him all that honourable ambition could covet; and in the mean time, as his uncle said, by sending him abroad, keep him out of harm's way.

Mr. Grantley could not help admiring the exquisite ingenuity of the young politician. He said it was an excellent thought, and that he would lay it before his chief, as soon as he could lay any thing, but that at present he was so great a martyr to his disorder that he could listen to nothing.

Clayton fastened upon this with great interest, and observed, as if, however, by chance or sudden recollection, "This is another point on which Lord Mowbray wishes to consult you.

The crisis is, indeed, alarming, and the contest between Mr. Wentworth and Lord Oldcastle tremendously high; I hope, myself, the Minister will not be too eager to resign, till something more certain appear, as to the succession."

"I hope so too," observed the confident; and these two speeches of the young and the old politician, were by far the most sincere, if not the only sincere ebullitions, that had escaped either of them for the last month.

Still the confident of Lord Mowbray could not bring the confident of the Minister up to his point; for Mr. Grantley did not choose to be sounded by a man whose designs he thought at best but equivocal, and for whom he had no particular predilection. He looked with his usual scrutiny into Clayton's smooth face, but found it under a most vacant expression, which conveyed to him no intelligence of the secret motives which yet he was quite sure had actuated him in this critical visit: there was neither openness nor concealment in it—all was negative: perhaps the very best turn of countenance a devoted humble servant or a spy can possess.

Yet Grantley wished to know, if he could, whether the reports of Lord Mowbray's intend-

ed junction with Mr. Wentworth were true: he therefore determined to sound in his turn; and reverting to De Vere, observed that he had heard that, among other young men, he had been smitten with the warmest admiration for Mr. Wentworth, and asked whether it was the *family* feeling.

Mr. Clayton perceived what he meant, but was far from intending, on that account, to answer the question. Indeed this able young man seemed already to have made a discovery which one could only have expected from such profound diplomatists as have since promulged it: namely, that language was only given us in order to disguise our thoughts.

In pursuance of this discovery, Mr. Clayton answered the question as to the family feeling towards Mr. Wentworth, that he believed not; as from what he could observe, Lord Mowbray's inclinations were all in favour of Lord Oldcastle.

Now it by no means follows that this was true, because Mr. Clayton said it; and Mr. Grantley was too old a politician to fall into the snare. For though he did not actually conclude that that which Clayton had asserted, was what many mistaken vulgar people would

have called a lie; yet he, in his experience, thought it not impossible that it might be a mere demonstration to amuse him.

Giving Clayton credit, therefore, for an insincerity which he thought might have become more experienced years, he resolved to play his own game upon him; and, with a view to discover whereabouts he really was, intimated his astonishment at what Clayton had asserted, as it was known, not only that Mr. Wentworth had personally a much greater following than Lord Oldcastle, but that his favour in the highest quarter had very greatly increased.

Perhaps after this, it will not be credited that Mr. Grantley had that very morning signed a treaty with Lord Oldcastle, and Lord Mowbray another with Mr. Wentworth, by which a strict alliance, offensive and defensive, had been respectively agreed upon against all opponents: for uncertainty, the only real scruple of Mr. Grantley (whose inclinations had always led him to Lord Oldcastle), had given way to a letter of authority from Windsor, which informed him, that the intentions of the creator of ministers had been at last let out, and that there was no doubt of Lord Oldcastle's complete success.

Strange to say, on the other hand, Lord Mowbray had been influenced by a letter from Lord Cleveland, giving precisely the contrary information. But as Lord Mowbray did not so perfectly rely upon his informant, now that he had declined in favour, his lordship had grown uneasy, and hence the visit of the *parvenu.*

The answer of Clayton, upon this assurance of the great confident, now gave the latter all the advantage he wished in this race of dissimulation. "For," said Clayton, "upon the whole I rejoice, since there is no doubt of Mr. Wentworth's superior talents and popularity; and it will be up-hill work to have him in opposition." He added, "That Lord Mowbray *was by no means committed* to Lord Oldcastle, if, indeed, he had not allowed Mr. De Vere's predilections to commit him to Mr. Wentworth; that, at any rate, he would sacrifice personal inclination (if it could be called inclination) to the advantage of his country, and of course would not think of withdrawing his support:" by which last phrase, it was most improperly understood by some very ill-informed and impertinent people, that Lord Mowbray meant to stay in his place—if he could.

Mr. Grantley perceived at once where he was, and, too adroit to push him farther, allowed him to take his leave in the full joy of being able to tell his patron that their speculation was right; while Mr. Grantley himself immediately sought out Lord Oldcastle to inform him of his discovery.

On the return of Clayton to his chief, a summons was sent by Lord Mowbray to a number of his and Mr. Wentworth's friends, as well as others, to meet at Mowbray House, which had become, as we have seen, the focus of party politics.

Here his lordship was most peculiarly active in proposing and cementing a strong coalition to stand by one another in support of Mr. Wentworth's views, whatever they might be.

Mr. Wentworth himself was there, and the sun in Persia scarcely ever rose with greater splendour, in the opinion of his worshippers.

De Vere was not present, but no doubt was entertained of his sentiments, as he dined the next day with Mr. Wentworth at one of his private dinners.

CHAPTER XIII.

POSTHUMOUS FAME.

And—when I am forgotten, as I shall be,
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention
Of me must be heard.

SHAKSPEARE.

De Vere's acquaintance with Mr. Wentworth arose out of the introduction of their mutual friend Dr. Herbert.

Mr. Wentworth had been made acquainted with all the oppressions, and all the self-exertions, of the moated house; and, ardent himself, and still perhaps with some pent up romance in his composition, which all the struggles and events of his life could not absolutely conquer, he conceived both liking and esteem for his young friend.

On the other hand, De Vere saw in Mr. Wentworth, much, if not every thing he admired. He thought him, as in times a little farther off, another considerable minister was thought, by one who well knew how to describe

him, "a person of as much virtue as can possibly consist with a love of power; and his love of power no greater than what is common to men of his superior capacities." He admired and loved him, too, for many other qualities.

But it is not easy to describe this able and accomplished person. His mind was an assemblage of all that could excite, and all that could soothe; his heart, the seat of an ambition, belonging, as it were, to himself; equally above stooping to court or people, and which no fear of either could affright.

With all this, his feelings were attuned to friendship, and his intellect to the pleasures of elegant cultivation. Thus he shone alike in the tumult of party, and the witchery of letters. In these last, he had been beautifully distinguished, and had had many amiable associates, before he acquired his political eminence.

In the senate, his eloquence was like a mountain river, taking its rise from reason, but swelling its impetus by a thousand auxiliary streams of wit and imagination, which it gathered on its way. It is, indeed, difficult to say whether his wit, or his reasoning predominated; for such was the effect of both united, that never was

reason so set off by wit, or wit so sustained by reason. The one was a running fire, flashing from right to left over the whole field of argument, so as to embarrass and paralyze his antagonists; while the other, when seriousness was resumed, struck down every thing that opposed, with the force of thunder.

But he had a more powerful recommendation still to the favour of his auditors, whether in the senate or elsewhere. His politics, as his heart, were truly, I might say insularly, British; and though he contemplated and understood the Continent, as well as any, and better than most who went before him; of the Continent it was his principle to steer clear, except in so far as it was connected with Britain. This did not fail to "buy him golden opinions with all sorts of persons;" and he wound up all by a staunch adherence to his personal friends, not one of whom he had ever been known to fail, or to abandon. This made him the most loved for his own sake, of all the leaders of his time *out* of the House, while in it he reigned without struggle or compeer,—*nihil simile aut secundum.*

Yet, superior as Mr. Wentworth was in all these respects, he was kept, strange to say, from

rising to the highest point, by the influence or intrigues of far less gifted rivals. Men wondered at this, but (happily for the repose of mankind) the times are over when a man who could not rule by other means, did not scruple, if he could, to seize the government by force, and awe even his prince into dangerous compliances.

Mr. Wentworth knew this, but, even in other times, would never have attempted to go so far, and he therefore contented himself at present with a second place.

This, at the time we write of, was the less irksome, because the high quality and worth, and still more, the long habit of being considered the leader of his party, which belonged to the Premier, induced the submission of all to his authority, without a murmur.

Every body, however, foresaw, from what has been stated, that the Premier's resignation would occasion a contest for the succession, which might shake the administration to its centre; and Mr. Wentworth was not a man to submit to hold a second rank under any other living person.

Such, then, was the public character of this accomplished man; and there were not wanting

those who observed, in his connection with great families, in the spread of himself among all men of parliamentary power, and particularly in the attachment of the young men of rising talents to his person, a promise of future strength which might one day influence the fate of the empire.

Mr. Wentworth's public dinners were frequent and thronged, and in them he displayed all the felicity of his wit, and all the conciliation of his manner. But the delight of his secret heart was in banquets far more select, and far more happy. These were his private parties, with men who were either independent of politics, or with whom politics did not form the first passion of their minds; men who were of kindred with himself in every thing that could charm the taste, or enlighten the understanding. With these, he continued still occasionally to live, although often separated from them by that which separates all who are not linked in the same pursuit—the struggles of ambition, and the tumults of party.

At these private entertainments De Vere had now the good fortune sometimes to be a guest, particularly when Herbert was in town, and gave him the meeting; for Mr. Wentworth,

though much older, was young enough to have received, in common with De Vere, the benefit of Herbert's able superintendence.

Of these parties, too, was often Sir George Deloraine—the delight of his friends, and indeed, of all elegant society; eminent in the polite arts, and skilled in polite literature; with a power of communicating himself which was absolutely charming, when he got over the only drawback to his powers (if it was a drawback) —a modesty amounting sometimes to shyness. This amiable man always set off the fine polish of his mind, by mingling something of a sentimental cast with all his tastes. He indeed held, that to connect itself with sentiment, was always a great ingredient in the composition of taste itself.

It happened that Sir George was a frequent visitor of Westminster Abbey, on which he had been so rallied by his friends, that he generally endeavoured (from the shyness above-mentioned) to enjoy it by stealth, and often tried to make his entry and exit by some private way. Unfortunately he had been detected by Wentworth in coming out of the door by Poet's Corner, on the very day of one of these dinners, when De Vere was a guest; and, as we may

suppose, was shown up immediately by the unmerciful Minister, who put him upon the defence of his *Cockney* tastes, as he called them, with a raillery that was equally keen and protracted.

The enthusiastic Sir George defended himself stoutly; which was precisely what his companions wanted; as his feelings never shone out so much, as when an attack had forced him from his natural reserve. In the course of his defence, after making every one feel the warmth with which he described the contemplation of those rich monuments of departed genius, addressing himself to Wentworth, he added, "It would do all you men of power good, if you were to visit them too; for it would show you how little more than upon a level, is often the reputation of the greatest statesman, with the fame of those, who, by their genius, their philosophy, or love of letters, improve and gladden life even after they are gone.

The whole company saw the force of this remark, and Wentworth not the least among them.

"You have touched a theme," said he, "which has often engaged me, and others before me, with the keenest interest. I know nothing so calculated as this very reflection, to

cure us poor political slaves, (especially when we feel the tugs we are obliged to sustain,) of being dazzled by meteors."

"Meteors! do you call them?" said Dr. Herbert. "Men do not run after meteors with such rapid and persevering steps, as you great people pursue ambition."

"I grant you," returned his friend; "and if we did not *think* them something better, who would give himself up to such labour, such invasions of their privacy and leisure, as we are forced to undergo?"

"What is it then that so seduces you?"

"A little intoxication," returned Mr. Wentworth, (laughing off a subject which he did not wish carried too far;) "for which you philosophers say we ought to be whipped; and for which, whipped we often are. Those, however, who want this whipping would do well to take Sir George's advice, and visit the shrines of the mighty dead. They would see how inferior most of themselves are in present estimation to beings who, when alive, could not, in splendour at least, compare with them. I have too often made the reflection, and was not the happier for it."

"You cannot be serious," said the Divine,

"since who are such real benefactors to mankind, as enlightened legislators and patriot warriors? What poet, I had almost said, what philosopher, can stand in competition with the founder or defender of his country?"

"Ask your own Homer, your own Shakspeare," answered Wentworth; forgetting his ambition for a moment in his love of letters.

"You take me in my weak part," said Herbert, "and the subject would carry us too far. I would remark, however, that but for the Solons, the Romuluses, the Charlemagnes, and Alfreds, we should have no Homer or Shakspeare to charm us."

"I know this is your favourite theme," said the Minister; "and you know how much I agree with you. But this is not precisely the question raised by Sir George; which is, the *superiority* in the temple of Fame, enjoyed by men distinguished for their efforts in song or history; (but who might have been mere beggars when alive,) over those who flaunted it superciliously over them in a pomp and pride, which are now absolutely forgotten."

"I will have nothing to do with supercilious flaunters," replied Herbert; "I speak of the liberal, the patriotic, who seek power for the

true uses of power, in order to diffuse blessing and protection all around them. These can never fail to be deservedly applauded; and I honour such ambition, as of infinitely more real consequence to the world, than those whose works (however I may love them in private) can, from the mere nature of things, be comparatively known only to a few."

"All that is most true," said Mr. Wentworth; "and for a while, public men of the description you mention, fill a larger space in the eye of mankind; that is, of contemporary mankind. But extinguish their power, no matter by what means; whether by losing favour at Court, or being turned out by the country, to both which they are alike subject; let death forcibly remove them, or a queen die, and their light, like Bolingbroke's, goes out of itself; their influence is certainly gone, and where is even their reputation? It may glimmer for a minute, like the dying flame of a taper, after which they soon cease to be mentioned, perhaps, even remembered."

"Surely," said the Doctor, "this is too much in extremes."

"And yet," continued Wentworth, "have we not all heard of a maxim, appalling to all

lovers of political fame——'that nobody is missed?' Alas! then are we not compelled to burst out with the poet:—

'What boots it with incessant care,
To tend the homely, slighted shepherd's trade!
And strictly meditate the thankless muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?'"

Both Sir George and De Vere kindled at this; and the Doctor himself smiled, when the Minister proceeded.

"In short," said he, "when a statesman or even a conqueror is departed, it depends upon the happier poet or philosophic historian, to make even his name known to posterity; while the historian or poet acquires immortality for himself, in conferring upon his heroes an inferior existence."

"Inferior existence!" exclaimed Herbert.

"Yes! for look at Plutarch, and ask which are most esteemed, himself, or those he records? Look at the old Claudii, and Manlii of Livy; or the characters in Tacitus; or Mecænas, Agrippa, or Augustus himself—princes, emperors, ministers, esteemed by contemporaries as gods!! Fancy their splendour in the eye of

the multitude, while the multitude followed them! Look at them now! Spite even of their beautiful historians, we have often difficulty in rummaging out their old names; while those who wrote or sang of them, live before our eyes. The benefits they conferred passed in a minute, while the compositions that record them last for ever."

Mr. Wentworth's energy moved his hearers, and even Herbert, who was too classical not to be shaken by these arguments.

"Still, however," said the latter, "we admire, and even wish to emulate Camillus, and Miltiades, and Alexander; a Sully and a Clarendon."

"Add a Lord Burleigh," replied the Minister, "who, in reference to Spenser, thought an hundred pounds an immense sum for a song! Which is now most thought of, or most loved? the calculating minister or the poor poet? the puissant treasurer, or he who was left 'in suing long to bide?'"

Sir George and De Vere, considering the quarter whence it came, were delighted with this question. The Doctor was silent, and seemed to wish his great friend to go on.—He proceeded thus:—

"I might make the same question as to Horace and Mecænas; and yet, I dare say, Horace was as proud of being taken in Mecænas's coach to the Capitol, as the Dean of St. Patrick's in Oxford's or Bolingbroke's, to Windsor. Yet, Oxford is even now chiefly remembered through that very Dean, and so, perhaps, would Bolingbroke, but that he is an author, and a very considerable one, himself. We may recollect," continued he, "the manner in which Whitelocke mentions Milton—that '*one* Milton, a blind man,' was made secretary to Cromwell. Whitelocke was then the first subject in the state, and lived in all the pomp of the seals, and all the splendour of Bulstrode; while the blind man waked at early morn, to listen to the lark bidding him good morrow at his cottage window. Where is the Lord Keeper now?—where the blind man? What is known of Addison as Secretary of State? and how can his Excellency compare with the man who charms us so exquisitely in his writings? When I have visited his interesting house at Bilton,* sat in his very study, and read his very books, no words

* In Warwickshire.

can describe my emotions. I breathe his official atmosphere here, but without thinking of him at all. In short, there is this delightful superiority in literary over political fame, that the one, to say the best of it, stalks in cold grandeur upon stilts like a French tragedy actor, while the other winds itself into our warm hearts, and is hugged there with all the affection of a friend, and all the admiration of a lover."

"Hear! hear!" cried Sir George; which was echoed by De Vere, and Herbert himself.

"This is very good," said Herbert, looking at him with great keenness in his small black eyes; "and we are to understand, therefore, that you would have been happier in the pursuit of letters and philosophy than of power. You would no doubt prefer, like Waller,

> 'All on the margin of some flowery stream,
> To spread your careless limbs;'

rather than like Shakspeare, in a storm,

> 'To look abroad from some high cliff, superior,
> And enjoy the elemental war.'"

"I know not," said Wentworth, "but among friends I may say, that though I have pur-

sued, and as some think, obtained power, I have not been the happier for it."

All were struck with the emphasis which he laid upon the words, "*as some think*," and each looked at the other with a significance which seemed to say, more was meant than meets the ear. He perceived it, and in rather a hurried manner returned to the subject.

"With regard to myself," said he, "I repeat, among friends, that the glare we all live in, is not what I should say, was real happiness; though, like drunkards, few can quit their acquired taste. I trust, however, I could return to the shade at an hour's warning, and find a repose far from the gaze of men, more gratifying than in buffeting and being buffeted as we are, although victory be the consequence."

At these words, spite of himself, he fell again into a sort of reverie.

"Well," said Herbert, resuming, "all this is very fine, and we are bound to believe, that you, at least, believe yourself. Nay! I have no doubt," added he, (the smile increasing almost into a laugh,) "we shall soon see you among your orange trees at Wimbledon."

"Sooner, perhaps, than you are aware of," replied the Minister, continuing his serious mood. "But whether sooner or later," (here he rather forced cheerfulness,) "my orange trees are always too delightful not to be welcomed with gladness. If I *am* sent to them, I assure you, I shall snuff their blossoms with not the less pleasure, because delivered from some knaves and many fools; or even from the task of reading the beautiful effusions of office, instead of those of the *mens divinior*, which delight you, Doctor, in the sacred retirement of your cloister."

"So you will no doubt think to-night," replied the Dean, after you dismiss us, and pass the half of it, perhaps, in composing those very effusions of office. Forgive me, if you remind me of what the great critic of life says of his usurer:—

> 'Hæc ubi locutus fœnerator Alfius,
> Jamjam futurus rusticus,
> Omnem relegit Idibus pecuniam;
> Quærit Kalendis ponere.'"*

* The usurer Alfius, full of dreams of a country life, as soon as he had ended this rhapsody, called in all the money he had at interest, in order immediately—to put it out again.

Mr. Wentworth took his raillery in good part, and the entrance of coffee changed the conversation.

The effects of this little discussion were not unimportant on the mind of De Vere. The sentiments of Mr. Wentworth were congenial with his own, and pleased all his favourite predilections. He pictured him in retreat from power, either after being fatigued and weighed down with labour, which a love of country, as well as taste, had induced him to undergo; or towering in real *contemptu mundi*, above the intrigues and envy of rivals, though they might succeed in displacing him. "It is then", said De Vere, "notwithstanding his political fire, it is then he will shine most. It will be beautiful, if ever it happen, to see the manner in which he will make the philosopher rise above the statesman, and, in a refined retreat, to observe how he will enjoy the "solicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ."

Was De Vere right in his speculation?

CHAPTER XIV.

A RETIRING MINISTER.

But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world ;—now he lies there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.

SHAKSPEARE.

Those who are acquainted with the nature of ambition, may be able to answer the question with which we concluded the last chapter. To those who are not, it may appear strange, that in the very moment of uttering the sentiments, which De Vere thought so beautiful, Mr. Wentworth, in his public capacity, was plunged in excitements and difficulties of the most harassing kind. The Premier, more ill in mind than in body, and moody from disgust, could do nothing if he would, and scarcely would if he could ; so much had he himself been thwarted in all his projected arrangements. In fact, at the close of an illustrious life, in which almost every hour had been one of applause, he had

the misery, as has been hinted, to see himself neglected in his decline, and his friends dropping off one by one,

"Gone to salute the rising morn."

He was not too much attended to at Court where he had never been a courtier; and not too much remembered by the country, which though saved by his services, cared little for him now he was no longer wanted. Oh! how much better, he thought, to have died ere this had happened!

The hardness of his political opponents who lowered in embattled watch over his hoped-for removal, he could have borne; but the indifference of followers, however coldly he had treated them, now touched his heart. He ruminated too late on the instability of the world, which, if he recovered, he resolved to abandon for ever; and to this resolve, the world, now they had no farther use for him, were extremely indifferent. Nothing, therefore, was heard but the incessant roll of carriages thronging to the doors of expected successors, and people read of their different merits and pretensions in daily publications, which raged with all the violence of party.

In this situation, a man, (one of the very few who remained attached to the Premier,) of a bold sarcastic turn, who expected nothing by a change, and who was high enough in office to take the liberty, replied to the numerous inquiries that were one day made concerning the Minister, that he was infinitely better, that he meant not to resign, and would certainly attend the council in two days more. The impression made on the different inquirers, whom he thus fooled, gave ample food to his disposition to ridicule; and the Court, the Treasury, and both Houses of Parliament, were filled for some hours with the most ludicrous exemplifications of the hopes and fears of candidates, and the friends of candidates.

Of this, De Vere was a near and observing witness, and it did not raise his brother politicians in his estimation; while the contemplation of the abandonment (if nothing worse) in which this once great Minister was suffered to sink from power, sickened his heart, and at least did not increase his respect for party ambition.

While his feelings were much excited by this, he met and joined his altered friend Lord Eustace, who seemed hurried, and big with expec-

tation of impending events. De Vere was big with them too; but he could not help thinking even more of the past, in regard to the great man about to retire from the scene, than the future, where younger energies were ready to push him from his stool.

He expressed this feeling to Eustace, expecting him to echo it; but Eustace, who had for some time been much estranged from him, avoided the subject; observing, however, frankly enough, that he was too much plunged in present interests, to think of those that were gone by. He was full of the expected crisis; of a change among the men in power; which is always, in England, enough to stifle at least one half of the considerations which lead to it, and whilst the excitement lasts, diminishes the most natural sympathies, and extinguishes even the appearance of sentiment.

To De Vere's lamentation, therefore, he rather coldly replied, "your hero *has* been a great man, but he has outlived himself, and forgotten his own Horace,

"Solve senescentem, mature sanus equum?"

"In truth," added Eustace, "he ought not to have quitted retreat, where his greatness would

have always been sacred, and his reputation unalloyed."

"The force of recollection, however," replied De Vere, "*will* burst forth, spite of all minor spots, which, like the spots in the sun, are lost in its radiance."

"True," said Eustace, "but the radiance now no longer shines, and recollections will not revive it."

"And, therefore, as most commodious, we bury them both in the same grave," returned De Vere.

"My dear Sir," said Eustace, who was quickening his pace towards Downing Street, "let us think of settling the new Minister first, and it will then be time enough to show gratitude to the old one."

De Vere immediately slackened his steps, and allowed his former friend to leave him; wondering, and not pleased with the sentiment which had escaped him. Flowerdale, whom he saw immediately afterwards, told him it was the most natural thing in the world.

"He is ardent as to the present," said De Vere, "but I could not have thought him so cold to the past."

"And yet you would have shown the same

ardour," observed Flowerdale, "had the question been about a mistress."

"A mistress!" exclaimed De Vere, overset with surprise; then colouring deeply, asked what he meant?

"I only wish," replied Flowerdale, "to explain one excitement by another. Party is Lord Eustace's mistress—

"And it must be owned," returned De Vere, recovering, "he pursues her with a devotion, which I suppose must succeed."

"He moved the address admirably," said Flowerdale.

"Which seems to have spoiled him," answered De Vere, "for it has apparently extinguished his better feelings."

"He is full of the hope of power," said Flowerdale, "and has not time for feeling."

"His hope is too high not to be cast down," answered De Vere. "The cabinet would scarcely content him now, especially as there will be so many vacancies."

"And are you too, quiescent?"

"Not quite; but I own I think as much of the star that is setting, as that, whichever it is, that is to rise. When I now hear of the Minis-

ter, and of the heartless indifference of those who once 'spaniel'd him at heels,' nay, of the nation whom he once ruled in such gorgeous triumph, I am filled with mournful reflections. Who now

> 'Sues, and kneels, and says God save him?
> Where be the bending peers that flatter'd him?
> Where be the thronging troops that follow'd him?'

Even though Eustace were himself to succeed him, I think he might have stopped awhile, and thought of him with other feelings."

Flowerdale respected these sentiments, but observed, "on the field of battle one can seldom stop even to pity, much less to succour one's best friend; though after the fight is over we may be deluged in grief for him."

"That is true," said De Vere gravely; "and how will it all turn out?"

"Shall I tell you?" answered Flowerdale. "If Lord Oldcastle succeed, there will be all the decencies of high respect for the late Premier; national gratitude will be enlarged upon, and a wish to follow his steps expressed, *et cætera, et cætera.*"

"How if he fail?"

"The veneration will be swelled to adora-

tion; orations worthy Pericles will raise him to immortality; we shall hear of nothing but the

'Clarum et venerabile nomen;'

and his fame will be lauded beyond all power of imitation."

"And why this difference?" asked De Vere.

"To draw the stronger contrast to the disadvantage of the successor."

"What! if the successor be Mr. Wentworth? He whom all men unite in elevating almost to a level with the Premier himself?"

"Before he has been installed a month," replied Flowerdale, "a week, nay, perhaps a day, there will be a cry of

'Dignum imperio nisi imperasset.'

"It is extraordinary in the strivings of party, what hypothetical wonders are attributed to a man before he is in power; how depreciated the very moment after he is invested with it."

"But Mr. Wentworth is tried."

"As second, I grant you," answered Flowerdale; "but he has never been chief. It is astonishing what difference in merit this little circumstance will often create. For myself, I

agree with you that, whether as first or second, there is no man to compare with him, and so think those who will oppose him. Those who oppose the Premier now, speak their real sentiments of him. Let him be Premier, and the *expression* of the opinion at least will be stifled. A thousand insects will be let loose to buz, sting, and torment, if they cannot destroy him."

"I have observed this in regard to others," said De Vere; "but here, in wit, in eloquence, in literary powers, his superiority is so uncontested, I may say so incontestable, that ——"

"I say again," interrupted Flowerdale, "he has not been First. Wait only till then, and judge."

"And what will be the consequence?" continued De Vere.

"Why, as they cannot cope with him in battle royal, they will teaze him with light troops in guerilla warfare. They will quiz and call names."

"Quiz!" cried De Vere, "ridiculous!"

"Nothing is ridiculous that tells in a system. But quizzing is in itself a more powerful weapon than you seem aware of. There have been instances of even a strong administration torn all to pieces by this little instru-

ment. A minister, like a trout, has sometimes been tickled to death."

"How delightful," said De Vere, laughing, "and perhaps as a reward for an honest ambition."

"Exactly so."

"But one cannot tickle a pike; and I see not still how they can assail our friend."

"I have said he cannot be assailed in regular combat," answered Flowerdale. "He is, personally, too powerful to meddle with; but scurrility may be let loose, and affected contempt thrown upon his most dazzling talents."

"One shake of the lion's mane will put down all this," said De Vere.

"I agree, and am glad you are not so sensitive as I thought," replied the Baronet. "You will in time, I dare say, be able to brave party virulence, and laugh at opposition as you would at a gnat."

"All this, however," continued De Vere, "does not raise my veneration for party politics, or even for national gratitude; and it is inconceivable to me, that after a life of, surely, as much integrity, ability, and glory, as ever adorned a favourite of history, the desertion of

the great man now retiring, should be so mournfully complete."

"The expression you have used of party politics, explains it all," said Flowerdale. "In this country, ministerial power, whoever is the possessor, is a constitutional sin; and while it is held, will be punished as such. Were the question of a military or naval hero (not a politician) you would not have to complain. As it is, when the resignation takes place,

'Extinctus amabitur idem,'

and whenever Lord —— dies, the national gratitude will no doubt pour itself out in the most splendid public funeral. But, in the mean time, what would you say, if he whose closing power you so lament, and whom you justly call the favourite of history, is already styled an impostor and its mountebank."

De Vere started; but said it must be some piece of insolence of the kennel.

"Not so, I assure you," replied the Baronet, "the person who has presumed to this insolence, has long reigned among the wits of the time, and while he affects republicanism, is the quintessence of quality, and the Prince of Aristocrats.

Nay, he is the son of a great Prime Minister himself, an old Senator, and owes all his fortune to places and pensions; which he very quietly pockets, while he rails by the hour, at placemen and pensioners, and writes and talks of nothing but the insincerity of courtiers, and the oppression of Kings."

De Vere, though he had already almost done wondering at the world, observed that this gentleman must be a nondescript.

"He is certainly no ordinary character," replied Flowerdale, " and possesses, in addition to many other requisites, no ordinary stock of assurance. However you may judge for yourself." He then named to his inquiring friend, a gentleman eminent for the possession of talents and literature, which, however, he allowed to evaporate in dowager gossip, though he contrived to make it the most agreeable thing in the world, and hence was infinitely the fashion. Every thing he said or wrote was pointed with wit, generally of a caustic kind. He went infinitely beyond De la Rochefoucauld; and was a puissant example of the

" Nul n'aura de l'esprit
Hors nous et nos amis."

His "amis," however were very few; since few in the world, whether statesmen or heroes, and still less men of piety or learning, were good enough for him. He therefore had lately taken it into his head to quit Parliament, and, as he said, party, and even the world itself, for all which he had grown too fastidious, though he was restless while not blazing in the midst of them.

Thus he amused himself, with assuming the airs of a Democritus, by laughing, though he preferred throwing dirt at every body of any character, seemingly for no other reason than that they possessed it."

"And was he not sometimes right, by chance?" asked De Vere.

"Of course," said Flowerdale; "but you shall judge for yourself, for I have been allowed to copy an extract from a letter of his, to one of his friends, a man of noble name, which is now the talk of the town. But prepare for a trial; for it will not add to your good-humour with public men."

"I will run the risk," said De Vere.

Sir William then unlocked a drawer, and placed a little manuscript in De Vere's hands, which the latter perused as follows:—

"I must tell you, I desire to die when I have nobody left to laugh with me. I have never seen or heard any thing serious, that was not ridiculous. Jesuits, methodists, philosophers, politicians, the hypocrite Rousseau, the scoffer Voltaire, the encyclopedists, the Humes, the L——s, the G——s, the atheist tyrant of Prussia, and the Mountebank of History, Mr. P——, all are to me but impostors, in their various ways. Fame or interest are their objects; and, after all their parade, I think a ploughman, who sows, reads his almanack, and believes the stars but so many farthing candles, created to prevent his falling into a ditch as he goes home at night, a wiser and more rational being, and I am sure an honester, than any of them. Oh! I am sick of visions and systems, that move one another aside, and come over again, like the figures in a moving picture. Rabelais brightens up to me, as I see more of the world; he treated it as it deserved, laughed at it all, and, as I judge from myself, ceased to hate it: for I find hatred an unjust preference."

"Your opinion," said Sir William, seeing De Vere in a fit of seriousness when he had finished.

"That if half this picture is not distorted, I am not so happy as the painter:—I cannot laugh at my species."

"I agree," returned the Baronet; "at the same time you will own he has assembled a great deal of good company on the same canvass."

"I cannot thank him for it," observed De Vere, "even if he is just; if unjust, he himself deserves to be hated, or at least to be classed among those he so hates, despises, and laughs at. I can neither respect nor believe a man, who tells me he never knew any thing serious that was not ridiculous. I will not say who is the mountebank of history, but I think it pretty clear, who is the mountebank of philosophy. At the same time, I own this cold-blooded ingratitude troubles me, and goes farther to cure me of even patriotic ambition, than any thing I have yet seen. Eustace was moderation itself to it. He was only selfish, this man both selfish, and malignant."

"All this is but too true," said Flowerdale.

"Then the less we discuss it the better," cried De Vere with emphasis; "I have got but little comfort from you to-day;" and he took his leave.

CHAPTER XV.

HALF-FACED FELLOWSHIP.

For mine own part, my lord, I could be well contented to be there, in respect to the love I bear your house. The purpose you undertake is dangerous; the friends you have named, uncertain. SHAKSPEARE.

If De Vere gained little comfort from the shrewd observer of the public drama that was going forward, the practical Sir William, he certainly did not improve his lot by mingling among the actors themselves. Yet he had points affecting his own fortune to carry. He was anxious to settle the question of the seat, as well as his views to office, which, though considerably weakened from passing scenes, were not relinquished. He spoke of both objects to Clayton, who gave him most loyal assurances, but referred him, as in duty bound, to his uncle.

He spoke of them to Lord Mowbray, but he found that noble person in far too great an

agitation about himself, to attend to such minor considerations; and when De Vere pressed the seat, with a view to support Mr. Wentworth, the effect upon the nerves and courage of his uncle was such as to deter one who was not too eager about it from pursuing it, at least for a time. Yet, considering what he had learned from Flowerdale, of Lord Mowbray's sacrifice of Lord Oldcastle, in order to join Wentworth and Cleveland, and the active share he had afterwards taken in promoting the coalition of their party, by assembling them at Mowbray House, he was struck with no little wonder at the coldness with which every proposal in favour of Wentworth was received.

De Vere, however, was not the only person embarrassed; for the time was such, at least for some days, that no one knew how to act or what to expect. The respective parties of Mr. Wentworth and Lord Oldcastle were indeed so nearly balanced, that they were ready to give battle *à l'outrance*, in the assertion of their respective pretensions. The doors of great officers of state were besieged, and the closet of the highest personage of the realm was frequently opened to various leaders, all professing to be actuated alone by an anxiety for the in-

terests of the empire; which interests, however, could only be consulted by a compliance with the particular views of each leader respectively. The reports, messages, long faces, conferences in ministers' rooms and secretaries' rooms, in the passages of Whitehall, under the trees of the Park, and in the recesses of the House of Commons, were innumerable, and too obvious for concealment; and (believe it who will) it was in the very midst of these agitating plans, that Mr. Wentworth gave the dinner, and held the philosophic conversation, which have been mentioned in a former chapter.

At the time, De Vere, though he knew the reports that were in agitation, did not know the share which the actual conduct of his friend had had in giving them currency. He knew not that he had, on the very morning of his dinner, been closeted with some of his most powerful supporters, who had for a considerable period been constantly urging him even to lay claim to the Premiership, when vacant, as his undoubted right, from the reputation he had obtained and the confidence he had inspired. They had even gone so far as to suggest, and actually to demand, a pledge from him, that, if he obtained the post, he would support and

carry into effect various reforms of which, these patriots said, the State stood cruelly in need; and nothing could appear more zealous than this body of partizans in a cause so virtuous, and likely to be so popular.

Mr. Wentworth, with great enthusiasm of character, and a spirit of as great integrity as the most inflexible patriot could wish, was himself sufficiently inclined to this principle of action. He gave the pledge required, and demanded and received, on his part, the most explicit promises, that should another succeed to the government, and he be obliged to retire, they would all make common cause, and act in party. What was his astonishment, therefore, to find, now the crisis was arrived, that these patriot friends seemed not only to have forgotten their principles, but to have changed their opinion in regard to his own pretensions. At another meeting which was held, they admired him, they said, as much as ever: thought him a great creature; a public possession, who ought to have one of the highest posts in the ministry: but as to engaging in opposition, should he unfortunately be left out of the new administration, they could not join in the attempt to force the closet of the King, who they found was

likely to decide in favour of Lord Oldcastle. They only hoped that he might still be allowed to hold his place under that noble person.

No language can describe the disdain of Mr. Wentworth at this change of conduct:-it called up all his pride of character, which he felt to be insulted, as well as that his fairest hopes were disappointed. His honourable ambition (for it was honourable) was thwarted, his rival exalted, his schemes for the public good paralyzed; and what wounded him most, (for he was of a most loyal and open disposition, and of a nature the most abhorrent to every species of treachery) all seemed to be the consequence of an intercourse of some standing with the Court, of which these friends had kept him wholly in ignorance. In short, it was only at the moment we speak of, that he learned that the compact which these friends had made with him, had been made while they were under the deception of an expected decision in his favour, in which expectation they were now disappointed; for it appeared certain that Lord Oldcastle would be called upon to name the new administration; and in that event he had declared against Wentworth's holding any place in it.

Mr. Wentworth was not of a temper, at any

time, to disguise his feelings, and he was at no pains to conceal them now: in fact, they escaped him in reproaches so bitter, and at the same time so just, that many of his auditors shrank from his presence. Among these, wonderful as it may appear, was Lord Mowbray himself. None of them dared to brave him; and the few who attempted explanation, but feebly represented their motives, which were founded, they said, upon the necessity—created by a spirit of discontent and rebellion among the people—to support the power, and therefore the choice of the Crown.

Stung by what he considered as downright treachery, the vehemence of Mr. Wentworth's mind now got the better of him, and he could scarcely prevent himself (still the second Minister of the Crown) from going down to the House, and denouncing what he called the intriguing character of the Premier expectant. At that moment he received a letter from his new ally, Lord Cleveland, expressing, after great lamentations of the untoward end of things, his sincere regrets that the hopes of the country had not been fulfilled in his (Mr. Wentworth's) person; but trusting that the circumstances of the times, and the contumacious,

ill-affected spirit abroad, would excuse him and the rest of the *King's friends*, if they gave their support to the new government, even though among its members *he* might not be included.

Wentworth's heart swelled with contempt as he read this letter; an expression of superciliousness, mixed with detestation, got possession of his features; and, tearing the letter to pieces, he exclaimed, "Why, what a frosty spirited rogue is this!" like Hotspur's lord fool, "for his own part, he could be well contented to be there, in respect of the love he bears our house: it is clear to me that he loves his own barn better than our house."

Out of humour with the world, particularly the political world, against which he sometimes meditated vengeance, sometimes retreat, he hastened home, avoiding in the way a number of bustling busy characters, especially those who had professed friendship for him and opposition to Lord Oldcastle. Arrived at home, he ordered his doors to be closed for some hours, which he passed in his closet meditating on the folly and inefficacy of power, or even of fame, to produce happiness; in which meditation he was much assisted by some eloquent sentences of Bolingbroke and Seneca, some of whose vo-

lumes always lay on his table, amid dispatches, debates, and party pamphlets.

Let not this picture be undervalued; for so versatile, and so amiable, in reality, was Wentworth's spirit, that, believe it who will, all this had its effect. He despised the base desertion of his party as much as ever; but by degrees he found himself in a sort of proud composure, and, on that very day, as we have said, presided at the dinner where he so delighted his guests with philosophic conversation.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN EX-MINISTER.

'Tis certain, Greatness, once fall'n out with fortune,
Must fall out with men too. What the declin'd is,
He shall as soon read in the eyes of others
As feel in his own fall. For men, like butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer.

SHAKSPEARE.

MEANTIME the final change had gone on; Lord Oldcastle was declared the first in power in the State; and Mr. Wentworth immediately, as he said he would, went to his orange trees. Their perfume, however, we suppose, he did not find so delightful as he expected, for he very soon came back again. Yet, while there, a friend who called upon him, found his table covered with the letters and memoirs which describe with such intense interest the breaking up of the Tory ministry of Queen Anne. The dissensions, rivalries, and heart-burnings, the implacable violence which divided

former friends, and the final disappointments and ruin of all concerned in that tumultuous and interesting time, seemed to have been the peculiar objects of his study. One passage he had marked, in a letter of Erasmus Lewis, on the fall of Oxford, and the succession of Bolingbroke.

"The runners," said the letter, "are already employed to go to all the coffee-houses. They rail to the pit of hell." He had also copied with his own hand, those verses of Oxford himself, written in the moment of his dismissal, more valuable from denoting the changed views of a fallen statesman, than either for the beauty of the poetry, or, as we hope, the justness of the sentiment. The lines are, indeed, in the very taste and spirit of Sternhold and Hopkins.

> "To serve with love,
> And shed your blood,
> Approved is above;
> But here below,
> Examples show,
> 'Tis fatal to be good."

Mr. Wentworth returned sooner than he intended, influenced, though he disguised it, perhaps, from himself, by the language that was

held about him, and which justified the account given by Erasmus Lewis of the proceedings of a similar time.

In fact, the town had been industriously filled with reports not to his advantage, and strange to say, not contradicted by those who best knew their want of foundation.

It is the observation of one who lived some time in the atmosphere of Courts, though his account of them is not to be always taken as correct, that "when a great minister has lost his place, immediately virtue, honour, and wit, fly over to his successor with the other ensigns of office."*

In this instance, the maxim was proved; for it was impossible to conceive the numbers that now changed their opinion both of Lord Oldcastle and his rival. The last had a facility, they said, in addressing the House, but was deficient in his office. He was unequal to its forms, and was often penning a sonnet, when he should have been writing a dispatch. Wits had more weight with him, certainly more access to him, than politicians. Lord Oldcastle was the reverse of all this; and, we might depend upon

* Swift to Sterne, 26th September, 1710.

it, things would now be differently and better administered.

Lord Oldcastle at least knew how to profit by this change of temper; and, unless he was much belied, showed a spirit worthy of Olivarez himself. For he employed many a young Gil Blas to feel the pulse of the nation, by decrying in pamphlets the characters and measures, not merely of his late coadjutor, but of the late Premier himself.

Among these useful instruments of misrepresentation, was, (with the full consent of Lord Mowbray,) our illustrious *parvenu*. Nor was Lord Oldcastle ungrateful; for, as proselytes are sometimes more useful, and therefore more valued than friends, (who are merely consistent,) the consequence to Lord Mowbray and his *protegé* was a continuance in their places. This, though bought by the eternal contempt of Mr. Wentworth and many others, was thought not too dearly paid for, while Mr. Wentworth confined his opinions to his own breast, or the expression of them merely to private circles. But this was scarcely to be expected from one not too famous for the control of his feelings, even when not, as in this instance, provoked and lashed by baseness as well as injury, into most

honourable indignation. He therefore did not fail to express his opinion of Lord Mowbray in the House, with a keenness and effect which turned the *parvenu* pale. And as to the *parvenu* himself, Wentworth, without scruple or disguise, and pronouncing every thing but his name,—while his eye flashed upon him with a sort of sacred anger,—designated him as "the smooth volunteer of dirty work, for whoever would pay the price of it."

The bitterness, and, to many, the justice of this reproach, seemed to electrify the House; and, as the *parvenu* (as has been described) was a man of sentiment, it gave a whole night's misery to his high sensibilities. He recovered, however, when he recollected that, at the Treasury, it might confer upon him the air of a martyr, and consequently a claim to some additional reward.

He was, therefore, only more assiduous than ever in his character of an official go-between; and Lord Mowbray made this affront an argument with the new Minister for bestowing marks of favour on himself, and on his *protegé* a sinecure place which then happened to be vacant.

"It may gild him," said the Minister, (who

had a keen view of character, and who looked, as he said it, as if he meant something more than an allusion to Clayton,) "but it will be with tarnished gold."

"Gild him, however," said Lord Mowbray.

All this was cutting to the heart of De Vere. He could not bear what he called the degradation of his uncle and of his friend; if Clayton was still his friend.

"Far from accepting new appointments," said he with some indignation to the latter; "you should have laid down the old one, after the conduct you held in favour of Mr. Wentworth."

Clayton in reply, deeply lamented the miserable state of affairs; wished himself a thousand times out of politics in some calm retreat, and said he had been inhumanly, and unjustly treated by the Ex-minister, whose cause he had always advocated, till he found him really too dangerously ambitious. But, in regard to his keeping or accepting new offices, he pleaded that he really was not his own master, but a mere follower of Lord Mowbray on that point. Nor could he prevent his patron, if he thought his honour concerned, from insisting that his accession to the new arrangement should not be

stigmatized, either in his own, or his friends person, and that therefore a strong demonstration should be made in their favour.

" That," said De Vere, little moved, " would require some high notice of my lord himself."

" You are right," returned Clayton, " and you therefore cannot be surprised if you find that he has accepted the red ribband."

" Good Heavens !" exclaimed De Vere, with an angry disgust which Clayton never liked ; " what is become of the spirit of the ancient Mowbrays ! And of what value can honours be to the honourable, if so abused ! But these rascally politics—" and he flung away from Clayton in discontent, though to the very great relief of that rising young man. In fact, De Vere from that moment felt an estrangement from him, which advanced in proportion as Clayton seemed to advance in the favour of Fortune.

CHAPTER XVII.

PREJUDICE.

> I did love you once !—
> Indeed, my lord, you made me oft believe so.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

HOWEVER pure and consistent had been the conduct of De Vere throughout the late tergiversations, neither his conduct, nor his indignation, at what he ignorantly thought the disgrace of his uncle, secured him from undeserved mortification.

On the one hand, he saw in his own family, how soon a political sin (to him of the deepest die) could be salved.

Nobody bowed the less to Lord Mowbray because he had been the first to form, and then to desert, a coalition. He bore his blushing honours unblushingly on his person ; nor did any one doubt, or (what is the same thing) show to *him* that he doubted, that they proceeded from the merited favour of his sovereign. His

drawing-rooms were still thronged, and their lovely mistress thought more attractive than ever: and as for Mr. Clayton, the castigation which it would have burst De Vere's heart to have submitted to, was forgotten; while in the smile of the world, he saw nothing remembered but that he was more at ease in fortune, and considered every where as one of her most prosperous children. Such difference makes success in the complexion of conduct.

On the other hand, De Vere's own attachment to Mr. Wentworth, for which he had involved himself in differences with his family, leading, perhaps, to disappointments of the tenderest kind, was not at first rewarded; nay, was at first repudiated by Wentworth himself, in a manner to give a severe check to his zeal.

To account for this we are bound to confess, that our friend, the Ex-minister, was cruelly soured by the disappointment and dishonourable conduct to which he had been made the victim.

It was not the loss of expected power, or of an immense patronage, that dwelt with him. What sunk deep into his heart, was the desertion of the great families who had promised to support him; and of followers, some of whom

he thought had loved him, and all of whom he believed he could direct with a master spirit.

Vehemence (however controlled by kindness and reason) was the character of Wentworth's mind, and sometimes got the better of him, though reason soon re-established her rule. But, while actually under the effect of strong feeling, it was not always that he could silence suspicion, or abstain from wronging a fair nature and integrity, perhaps as clear as his own. He did so on this occasion by De Vere.

He had regarded him, it is true, for his fine mind, and the ardour of his character, but as, during the time he had seen most of him, Lord Mowbray and his friends were seemingly united with him in party, he had no opportunity of distinguishing the very different sorts of attachment with which they and De Vere viewed him. And, as to fine minds, and energetic characters, he had discovered, by experience, that in the career of party, they were perfectly consistent with the abandonment of friends, and the leaguing with enemies, of however opposite principles, characters, or objects.

When, therefore, De Vere waited upon him, in fact, to assure him how little he had agreed

with his uncle's late measures, and to ask his future intentions, with a view, if he could, to give him his support after his election to parliament; Wentworth prevented all explanation, by a reception of the most freezing kind.

To De Vere's general assurances, he scarcely listened, and smarting at every pore with the injuries he had received from Lord Mowbray, impatiently, and almost sneeringly, interrupted him, by asking if he had come with avuncular discretion, to announce that he meant to adhere to the politics of *the* family?

De Vere looked astonished.

"Believe me," added the deserted Minister, "if this be so, and if that wise man Mr. Clayton, (wise he is in his generation,) has made you as wise as himself, you might have spared me the honour of announcing it in person."

Then, seeing De Vere about to reply, and fearing some unsatisfactory explanations, he asked him what he thought of the new actress,—naming an exquisite performer, who was a great favourite with him.

De Vere was shocked, and even angrily indignant at these insinuations. He proudly said he had not deserved them; that he had come with very different intentions, encouraged as he

had always been by the Ex-minister, to speak to him frankly; but finding that this tone continued no longer, he would not intrude, and he prepared to take his leave.

The Ex-minister had, as we have said, been soured by his disappointments, and, as we see, could ill-treat his friends while under this feeling. On this occasion, even De Vere's open manner, did not effectually cure him. He however lent himself so far to it, as at least to wish for inquiry.

"Stay," said he; "have you really had no explanations with your uncle? Have no prospects of office been open to you, after your election, if you support his line of politics?"

"None," said De Vere, loftily, "and I feel no honour in being asked these questions?"

"Bear with me," said Mr. Wentwoth, "once more, and forgive one other question; my reason for which, if necessary, I promise to explain. Has no hope of a certain lovely lady been conceived, or at least no influence on her part been practised, to win an assent, which less refined temptations, I know, could not seduce from you?"

The colour flashed in De Vere's cheek when he heard this. He breathed quick. Could the

lovely lady mean Constance? and was that secret (disguised as much as possible, almost from his own heart) not only known, but trumpeted to the world? It was a minute before he could reply. At length he haughtily answered, "I know no lady who would stoop to the endeavour to persuade me to that, which she thought I otherwise disapproved. But I own I resent these suspicions. They do not raise my opinion of your justice, and they diminish the regret with which I had seen the disappointment of my hope of your continuance in power; for I know nothing of the bribe you are pleased to impute to me, nor would it be able to influence my support or opposition to any public conduct you might think fit to pursue."

"Explanations, therefore," replied Wentworth, with equal distance, (but still misunderstanding him,) "seem unnecessary."

"I cannot suppose myself of consequence enough," answered De Vere, "to make you condescend to them; but the suspicions which, without proof or inquiry, you have been pleased to indulge, of the probity of my intentions, make such condescension of less consequence." Here he bowed, as if taking leave; but willing, nay,

hoping to be prevented, as he might have been, by the slightest manifestation of regret or explanation. But the Ex-Minister bowed too, and, to own the truth, with the most frosty politeness; and De Vere, hurt to the quick, took his leave.

"And this is the justice of party!" said De Vere, when he found himself alone. "This the course of political friendships! Yes! I have, indeed, much to learn."

His abstraction became so great, that he wandered almost to Kensington before he knew where he was; and twice his name was called by Lord Eustace, before he had recollection enough to answer.

This ardent young person, now at the height of joy from the complete success of his father, stopped not to inquire through how many crooked paths the race had been run; what promises had been broken; what friends lost; what principles compromised. New kindled hopes had made up for violated engagements; converted antagonists had replaced old allies; and a more practical policy had, perhaps, more than made up for antiquated principles, now laid aside. The world sat light upon him, and

success had made him indifferent to a host of enemies which the preference of his father to his rivals had in an instant created.

When this hostility was observed upon by a friend to Lord Oldcastle, the elder statesman only shook his head, and said, "We must deal with it as we can." The younger exclaimed, "So much the better; a ministry without a good rattling opposition, must be milk and water."

De Vere could hardly help envying Lord Eustace his undeviating ardour for the accomplishment of his object, and his ease, as to consequences, now it was accomplished. He was a spirited soldier of fortune, who thought only of success in the cause he fought for, and the comrades who fought with him: these were questions of much more importance than what the cause was, or who the comrades. At the same time, as a part of the ruling passion, his interest was always excited by the hopes of strengthening his father's ranks, or weakening those of the enemy. He had also liked De Vere, the partner of his studies, and his early ally; and though he had cast him off when he found him guilty of the hateful sin of preferring his father's rival, yet, as he had heard that that Minister had, in a fit

of resentment, included De Vere in a pretty vehement censure of the whole Mowbray connexion, not only he was struck with the hope of making a proselyte, but all his good-will returned: he therefore greeted De Vere with his usual frankness—a salutation which could not well be refused.

"We are together again," said Eustace.

"I never knew we had been asunder," answered his friend.

"He who is not for me is against me," rejoined Eustace; "but I heard you were not even neuter: and you have been prettily rewarded; for the great patriot (so he named Mr. Wentworth) abuses you and your whole family most roundly, I assure you."

The observation could not have been worse timed.

"I am afraid some of us have deserved no better of him," said De Vere.

"As if political engagements, which are always made for the public good," answered Eustace, "were not to yield to circumstances, when that good requires it."

"That is to say," replied De Vere, "every one is to judge for himself, as to a change, and play fast and lose as he pleases."

"Hang me if I argue it with you," replied the young politician; "I am in too good spirits,—but I 'm afraid the late Minister (meaning the retired Premier) will die: they say the gout has got to his stomach, and he cannot survive three days,"

"I am glad you are so interested for him," observed De Vere.

"I am interested that he should live, at least, a little while," replied Eustace; "for I want to attack him. He has left things in such a state, that you know not in how many points he is vulnerable: when I have exposed him he may die as soon as he pleases."

"Was he not once Lord Oldcastle's friend?" asked De Vere, greatly shocked.

"Rather Mr. Wentworth's," replied Eustace; "and, to tell you the truth, he recommended him for his successor."

"That is a vulnerable point, indeed," observed De Vere, and walked on in silence.

"Come," said Eustace, "I would rather talk of your own affairs. They tell me you despise us all so much in the House, that you don't think us worthy to be mixed with; and wish to leave your seat to Clayton for a time, while you forget courts and courtiers in diplomacy."

"Does Mr. Clayton tell you so?"

"Yes! and Lord Oldcastle has cordially assented."

"You surprise me; for I have not even applied."

"But your uncle has; and you see he obeys the gospel, for he does not let one hand know what the other doeth. In short, it is all approved, and you are to have your choice of three courts. Cleveland has been much your friend, I assure you, as well as Clayton."

"Indeed!" said De Vere, who felt neither honoured nor pleased with either assurance.

Eustace, however, opened the subject more at large, and acquainted him that Lord Mowbray had asked and obtained for him the nomination of minister to one of the three legations vacant on the recent change; and that he might kiss hands upon it as soon as he pleased. "*En attendant*," said Eustace, "Lord Oldcastle expects to see you. You may depend upon this as correct; and I wonder Clayton, who was charged with, and very instrumental in it, has not already informed you."

De Vere was filled with surprise, more at the news itself, than at the backwardness of Clayton in communicating it. But he was also embar-

rassed; which Eustace observing, De Vere said, "That with every sense of obligation to Lord Oldcastle, the matter was so new to him, that he begged time to consider of it."

"Do you mean," asked Eustace, "that Lord Mowbray and Clayton have been wrong in their representations?"

"I cannot say so exactly," returned De Vere; "but the thing has been lost in so many more interesting events; and you know, or I am bound to tell it you, that I am not one of Lord Oldcastle's lieges."

"Whose then?"

"No man's! for to no one do I, or will I owe fealty."

Eustace bit his lip with evident disappointment; but, as on the whole he liked De Vere, he allowed a frank nature, for once, to get the better of his party-spirit, and very honestly, though ironically, said, "You are, indeed, a great deal too exalted for us poor slaves of Party at home, and wisely cut us; though whether for honester people abroad, remains to be seen. It is clear, however, you will never come up to Dr. Herbert's judgment of Clayton."

"What was that?"

"Why, at a dinner at Lord Clanellan's,

where were the Doctor and other exemplary persons, the conversation turned upon the different modes of rising; and friend Clayton chose to doubt his talents that way, on account of the compliances and strange traffic which seemed necessary to conciliate different interests. Lord Clanellan stared, and Lady Clanellan laughed; but the Doctor exclaimed, in his oracular way, 'Never fear, Sir, never fear; I dare say you will in time make a very pretty rascal.'"

De Vere, amused, spite of his serious thoughts, asked if Clayton had assented?

"He had nothing left for it," answered Eustace, "especially as Lady Clanellan drank to his speedy success. But as he has not yet succeeded——"

De Vere shook his head.

"Come," said Eustace, "if you mean for joining Lord Oldcastle, when the King said *nay* to the high and mighty who wanted to enslave us, I, at least, must excuse him, whatever the Hagen Magen do. I trust, however, he has not been incorrect as to your views on diplomacy."

"With some reserves and explanations," said De Vere, "I might still have those

views; and those explanations Lord Oldcastle will, I suppose, permit me to make."

"My father is the most reasonable man alive," returned Eustace, "and as I left him at leisure, we will, if you please, go to him directly."

De Vere wished more time. He had scarcely thought of the plan since it had been proposed; a thousand uncertainties hung about him; he wished for a long and deep self-examination as to his opinions of public life, of men, and measures; he wished explanations still, (notwithstanding his recent loftiness,) with Wentworth; and above all, he wished to probe his own heart in regard to Constance.

But all this was prevented by the alacrity of Eustace; who insisted upon De Vere's going with him immediately; and, in fact, carried and presented him to his father, when, leaving them together, he cried, "There! now tell your own story."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DIPLOMACY.

Shall we call in the Ambassador, my liege ?—
Not yet, my cousin. We would be resolv'd,
Before we hear him, of some things of weight.

SHAKSPEARE.

LORD OLDCASTLE was a man of the smoothest address, and of a most silvery eloquence, whether in public or private. He had the most perfect self-possession, and was the personification of the *Volto sciolto.* Whatever he said or did, was marked by a mixture of habitual good-breeding, and seeming frankness; and it was always a man's own fault if he ever felt under constraint in opening his thoughts to him.

The rectitude of De Vere never felt constraint in opening itself to any man; but Lord Oldcastle would have put him at his ease had it been otherwise.

With great openness, as well as kindness of

manner, his Lordship himself began the subject; observing much upon his good-will towards his uncle, and, indeed, his obligations to him; to which he added the expression of great respect for De Vere himself. He then broached the question of diplomacy, descanted on the advantage of having a man of De Vere's birth and character, as the representative of the government at any court, and concluded by offering him the choice of the vacancies Eustace had mentioned.

To say De Vere was not pleased with this address, would be to wrong the truth. He was even won by it; and he felt the pleasure it would be, if the measures of such a man were what he could support. He had, however, many things to explain, and to guard, and had occasion for all his decision to prevent himself from being dazzled into general compliances, which might afterwards be attended with unpleasant consequences.

After thanking the Minister, therefore, for a reception so flattering, he begged leave, as the best return he could make, to explain with distinctness and honesty, how far Lord Oldcastle himself might judge he was in a condition to accept his offers.

Lord Oldcastle, with perfect frankness, said it was what he should most thank him for.

De Vere then explained to him, how much it had been his resolve, as well as his wish, ever since public life had been set before him, to keep himself distinct from party.

Lord Oldcastle smiled, but bade him go on.

De Vere continued, that it had been his hope, when he came into Parliament, to support the friends of his family; but his resolution was to give a reasonable, not a blind and slavish support.

Lord Oldcastle bowed, and with his hand spread on his bosom, said he wished for no other.

"It is, however, my duty, in honour to add," proceeded De Vere, "that I am an admirer of the character, talents, and rules of action, of Mr. Wentworth."

Lord Oldcastle again smiled, but with a repressed curl of his lip, and not exactly with the same ease as he had smiled before. He, however, again begged De Vere to go on.

"I have to confess, therefore," said De Vere, "that I was glad of my uncle's reported junction with him, and was even hurt at the breach of a positive engagement. I felt thus from my

admiration of Mr. Wentworth; but had the engagement been with your lordship, at such a breach, I should have felt equally mortified."

Lord Oldcastle smiled once more, and in a different sort still; as if he had said, his young companion had not known what reason there had been for that very mortification. But he did not allude to it in his answer, when he assured him, that though the intimations he had given him had been *something* different from what he had hoped, and what he had expected, and that probably De Vere would live to see the impracticability of his principles; still, what he had said, seemed only to proceed from very honourable sentiments, which he should be the last to oppose. That, as to admiring Mr. Wentworth, it was only his own feeling, and could never be imputed as a fault to any one.

"I do not collect, however," added Lord Oldcastle, good-humouredly, "that if you come into Parliament, you are enlisted under Mr. Wentworth, or against His Majesty's Government."

"Certainly not," answered De Vere; "but I own that his secession from the ministry is one inducement the more to make me think of

diplomacy; which may take me from the sphere of party (for which I am not fit,) and allow me to give my undisturbed attention to a great public duty, without any other pledge than a desire to perform it."

"All that is very prudent and praiseworthy," said Lord Oldcastle bowing, though with a little less ease; "and I am sure, if you are adopted into diplomacy, with such determinations, the secrets of government cannot be unsafe when entrusted to you."

"I should hope," observed De Vere, "that no man of honour, if once he accepted employment, could render them unsafe, though he might differ with his employers on general politics, or even opposed them in parliament."

"Again let me recommend your liberal notions," said Lord Oldcastle; "and if practicable any where, I am sure they are in diplomacy, in which there are not the personal and daily struggles that divide us at home;—accordingly, we have instances of men connected with the determined opponents of government, who have served the administration (because serving their country) with the utmost fidelity and honour. Nevertheless, when they have returned home, and their missions have ended—"

"They would deserve the rack," vehemently interrupted De Vere, "if they turned the information they had acquired against the government that had employed them."

"Nothing more just, nothing more honourable," observed Lord Oldcastle (again placing his hand on his bosom, as if penetrated with the sentiment); "but my experience has led me to think that all young men have not the exalted notions of Mr. De Vere;—I dare say we now understand one another,"—and he almost bowed him out.

Now here, if Lord Oldcastle understood Mr. De Vere, it was infinitely more than Mr. De Vere did Lord Oldcastle; and in this ignorance the reader probably will participate. Yet, as if the result had been explicitly established, the minister shook De Vere heartily by the hand, and De Vere found himself in the street, without a notion whether any, or what arrangements had been settled between them.

On leaving the house, and within a few yards of it, he saw Mr. Wentworth, who, eyeing him sufficiently to mark that he had seen where he had been, passed on apparently unconscious of the salutation which De Vere could not help bestowing upon him.

"He did not see me," said De Vere; "it is impossible his great mind can continue under the error of the morning. He must know the fidelity of my attachment to him:" and with this consoling reflection, De Vere gave himself up to the various and new interests which now pressed upon him on every side.

His first impulse was to seek Constance; for his heart longed to communicate with her's. But, amid the Bellamonts and Clevelands who besieged her, how was he to find one of those moments once so sweet to him, and, we may add, so serviceable? Besides, had he settled the point, whether he could leave her?—leave her for one or two years?—leave her at all? Eustace had driven on so quickly, that he had not had time to decide this and other questions: among them, whether he should relinquish his intended seat while abroad, if abroad he went; and finally, whether or not he was suitable for the profession which he seemed about to embrace.

While meditating these subjects, he fell in with his old counsellor, Flowerdale, to whom he communicated his interviews with Mr. Wentworth and the present minister: Sir William did not seem to like the account of either.

"The bane of your political hero," said he, "is what, to some people might do good—his vivacity of feeling. He was unjust to you, when you sought him; and depend upon it, if he saw you come out of the minister's house, his feeling will not be allayed."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed De Vere, "are party-politics so jealous?"

"The most jealous of all mistresses," said Flowerdale; "you will stand in need of all Mr. Wentworth's liberality, (and no man has more, when prejudice is over;) but you must wait his cooler moments, before you will be forgiven."

"How different," observed De Vere, "are the two men! The minister himself took my professions concerning his rival in admirable part."

Flowerdale smiled, but looked incredulous.

"Well, but," said De Vere, "his consent to my entering upon diplomacy, notwithstanding my avowals as to my politics, was surely the most liberal thing in the world."

"Are you quite sure of this consent?" asked Flowerdale.

"He assented to my principles," returned

De Vere; "and said, 'we now understand one another.'"

"And did you understand him?" asked Flowerdale.

'Twas a question De Vere had not quite considered; but he said it was an extraordinary one, as implying a doubt. "Even Mr. Wentworth's honest injustice," added he, "is better than this."

"A great deal," returned Sir William.

They walked on for some paces, when the Baronet asked, to which Court he inclined; but was surprised to be told, that the whole thing had been so hurried, that he had not quite settled an important preliminary, whether he was fit even for the career itself.

"If I have mistaken Lord Oldcastle, I fear I am *not*," said De Vere; "for it is evident I am too sanguine. Yet why should a sanguine temperament be incompatible with the high notions I have formed of the character of the representative of a great nation? I can scarcely conceive any thing more noble!"

"Or less liable to be circumvented by cunning, and scoundrels!" said Flowerdale.

De Vere anxiously asked his meaning.

"The English," returned the Baronet,

" were never famous for good ambassadors; even though educated in a foreign country, and, like the Duke of Berwick, in a foreign service."

" I know not your allusion," said De Vere.

" The little Italian Queen of Spain," answered Flowerdale, " got rid of him, you know, and sent him back to France. Being asked why she did not like him, she could only say, '*C'est un grand diable d'Anglois sec, qui va toujours droit devant lui.*' "

" Are we to regret this character?" asked De Vere.

" Not as men; but as diplomats, it might be as well if we had a little more of the Italian craftiness which is so often employed against us."

" I cannot agree with you," said De Vere, becoming thoughtful.

" Shall I tell you a story," resumed Flowerdale, " once related to me by one of the parties concerned,—a man full of sense and rectitude, and himself an ambassador?"

" By all means," said De Vere.

Flowerdale went on.—" 'And why do you go away, when you say you may remain here?' said Count Rhiensberg, one day, to the Baron

de Lindendahl,—' here, where you own you have a better salary, and affairs are of most importance.'

" 'Shall I tell you frankly?' answered the Baron.

" 'Yes.'

" 'Frankly, then, because, by remaining here, my diplomatic *métier* will be spoiled.'

" 'That I cannot understand. There are the greatest and most complicated affairs; the widest field for negociation; the—'

" 'All very true, my dear Count; no difficulty, no intrigues, except in Parliament, or for power. None for us foreign ministers; very little room for reasoning; still less for persuasion; none at all for manœuvring. In short, these English are too honest to be good politicians themselves, or give any play to others who are.'

" 'I don't yet comprehend,' said the Count.

" 'You will, before you have been here six months. For, if what we have to propose is wise and just, and expedient for England, ministers adopt it without any management from us: if improper, or impolitic, why, it is rejected, and the devil himself cannot bend them. You can neither bribe nor cajole. The laws

prevent the first; the numbers in the cabinet the last: fear of the confounded Parliament, both.'

"'Has, then, a minister for Foreign affairs here really no weak side?'

"'If he have, and you find it out,' said the Baron, 'of what avail? You must also get at the Premier's weak side, and the Chancellor's weak side, and the weak sides of all those who have to speak to measures in both Houses.'

"'Umph!' said the Count.

"'And therefore, I will go home,' said the Baron; 'my *maitre d'hotel* would make as good an envoy as I, provided he could deliver memorials with a good grace. My Government at home draw the memorials, and the Government here draw the answers; so, but for communicating events, which the newspapers know much better and sooner than we, we are of no use at all: and hence, I will go home again,' concluded the Baron.*"

* The substance of this conversation is not imaginary, and it coincides extraordinarily with the following opinion of Mr. A. de Staël Holstein, who seems sometimes, and notwithstanding some amusing blunders, to have viewed us well. "*Il n'y a pas de pays en Europe, où le métier d'Ambassadeur soit plus simple qu'en Angleterre,*

"Your story," said De Vere, "does not make me regret that I may probably be thought, like your Duke of Berwick, '*un grand diable d'Anglois sec, qui va toujours droit devant lui.*' However, I do not like your account of the people I may have to deal with."

"Wait till you are appointed," returned Flowerdale, "before you make yourself uneasy."

et où toutes les finesses, toute l'habileté pretendue de la Diplomatie, sont plus en pure perte."

Lettres sur l'Angleterre.

CHAPTER XIX.

ESTRANGEMENT.

I do believe it, for they pass'd by me
As misers do by beggars; neither gave to me
Good word, or look.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next day De Vere, still uncomfortable at his reception by Wentworth the day before, resolved to call upon him again, 'spite of those little hauteurs which, at first, had withheld him. But sleep had done much for him, as it always will for any good mind; nor can I think that man amiable, or even innocent, who, after the placidity and refreshment of a night's rest, can awake only to his resentments. He must forget the being who sheds this balmy blessing over our shattered, perhaps perverted senses, and who enjoins the forgiveness of all injuries before the sun goes down upon our wrath.

De Vere presented himself, therefore, early in the morning at Mr. Wentworth's, and was

ushered into a waiting-room, Mr. Wentworth being above stairs. What was his surprise, to receive a note from him, couched in these terms:—

"Your visit to the Minister yesterday, speaks all you can have to tell me. You have made your election; and, far from complaining of it, I only wish to make it more efficacious. It is useless, seeing me for my own sake; worse than useless, for your's.—This house is proscribed. You do ill to come to it.

"Adieu."

It would not be easy to describe the astonishment, mixed, perhaps, with indignation, that took possession of De Vere on perusing this note. The injustice of it was not greater than its decision; its decision, apparently, than its pride.

And yet something whispered De Vere that the pride was not altogether without kindness. But to be so suspected! so misunderstood! Was party feeling to turn every thing into civil war? Were the decencies shown towards one side to be converted into proscription by

the other? Above all, was a friend to be repudiated, without explanation or hearing? This thought inflamed De Vere. He no longer imagined kindness could exist where, on the face of it, there was so much studied rejection.

The servant who had brought the note, could not help observing it had agitated him, and, asking if there was any answer, received such a peremptory "No!" that he quickened his movement in opening the door; and De Vere had scarcely descended the steps before he saw and was recognised by Lord Oldcastle, at that moment proceeding to his morning ride.

With all his command of countenance, his Lordship could not conceal his surprise; nor, 'spite of a very civil reception of De Vere's bow, his displeasure, though De Vere did not perceive it,

"Nor dreamed of ill—intending none."

A few hours, however, changed the face of things; for they brought him a letter from Lord Eustace, in which, after a thousand regrets that his efforts to serve so old a friend had failed, he said, "My father, who is the

most straight-forward man alive, and most fearful of being misunderstood, has been uneasy, lest you should have indulged expectations from the conference of yesterday, which he never intended to raise. He admires you, and commends your explicit avowals, but with the same honesty on his part, confesses that he does not think his Majesty's service will be best consulted, by appointing to high and confidential employ, persons, however honourable, who give their confidence to the opponents of the government."

In the temper he was in, excited by the note he had received from Wentworth, this letter surprised more than it affected De Vere. He cared little for the dispersion of his diplomatic visions, in comparison with his vexation at being set so low by the very person, for his fidelity to whom, in his eclipse, he was thus rejected by his successful rival.

"As to Lord Oldcastle," said he, "Flowerdale was right, and knew his man; for I find, that to understand one another with his lordship, is any thing but to know what is meant. Thus, I am thrown off by both parties; and thus fare the efforts of a plain man to preserve his mere

freedom of action. But while I feel I am right, I will live for my own mind, not for others."

So saying, he stalked over the parade of the Horse Guards, in gloomy elevation of soul, and beheld the active spirits of the land, officers of state, generals, legislators, and judges, and the whole tribe of subordinates, all in motion, to and from the great scenes of business, the residences of ministers, the Houses of Parliament, the Council Chamber, and Westminster Hall. They were big with all the varieties of emotion which agitate poor human nature; some with fear and disappointment, some with hope and expectation; some raised, some mortified; but all excited and hurrying on in the same race, to be happy at the end of it till they started anew,—in order to be happier, or sink down for ever in feebleness and despondency, never to rise again.

He was saluted by many of his acquaintance, who supposed he was running in the same course himself; and who exhibited to his young but philosophic observation, countenances which, had he been a painter, he would afterwards have delineated; which, as a moralist, he often remembered. In proportion as *they* seemed

interested, he by degrees felt, or thought he felt, above all interest. "The world," said he, "uses me ill; why should I take part with the world?" and he began to meditate, as he always did on such occasions, on Talbois and Needwood. But he thought also of Castle Mowbray, and he thought of it with melancholy.

"It was there," said he, "*she* counselled me to pursue ambition, and I promised to do so; and would do so still for her dear sake; but, perhaps, that sake exists no longer; and for its own, what is ambition worth when Clayton succeeds?"

He was now near the gate of the minister's garden, which opening, there issued from it the very man he had just named, arm-in-arm with Eustace and Cleveland. They seemed in high spirits, and were proceeding to the House. But though they all evidently saw De Vere, and he was quite within hail, they as evidently wished to pass on without notice; a disposition with which his own was quite in unison. But a loud laugh from Clayton was echoed by the whole party, and alarmed his pride.

He was afterwards, indeed, ashamed to think how uneasy for an instant, this slight had been able to make him. And though not an or-

dinary character, this ought not to surprise; for even with persons lifted above ordinary life, among the whole range of the lesser evils, there is scarcely one that creates a feeling so sharp, as the changed behaviour of friends estranged from us by ambition. The blow to our love is hard to bear; but the wound to our pride is, for a moment, still harder. I say for a moment, because as soon as the independent spirit can assert itself, the cloud has past never to return. I speak, therefore, only of the actual passage from deference to indifference, from intimacy to distance, by those we have once loved; especially, if the change is accompanied by an assumption of superiority which we do not choose to admit.

The feeling operates differently upon different tempers. The meek lament; the humble shrink from it; the high-spirited meet it with proud defiance.

De Vere was, for the instant, among the proudest; and had not the gentlemen in question passed so rapidly on, he would have shown a resentment, of which he would, one minute after, have been ashamed. That one minute, however, brought him back to reflection and to his own character. He then felt towards

the two noblemen, little but indifference; for Clayton, nothing but contempt. "The upstart," said he, "has grown saucy under the wings of his new protectors. There let him nestle, till he leave them for higher protectors still. He is an excellent specimen of the reptilia, which the gallant Willoughby disdained."*

He mused upon this some time longer; and (perhaps, in a fit of disgust,) thought of writing to Lady Eleanor, to prepare for him at Talbois, where he pleased himself with happier visions of a life independent of these anxieties, and occupied with feelings belonging only to the worthier parts of our nature.

"There," said he, "the passions that blind us into a belief of what we know to be false, (that duplicity may be honour, and treachery success,) never have place. There, there is no friend who lets his disappointment misconstrue your actions; no eloquent cajoler, who approves sentiments which he thinks it right to punish; no miserable parvenu, who makes you a ladder to his ambition, and laughs at you for being so. No! for these there is no room

* See vol i. p. 241.

in a place where the soul retires on itself, and suffices to its own health.

The thought pleased, as it always will; for there is something so soothing, to the imagination at least, in the notion of retirement to those who are buffeted by the world, that its seductions continue to influence the weary, and inspire hope in the troubled, 'spite of the thousand disappointments, which attend, and ever will attend, those not properly prepared for it.

But De Vere thought himself prepared, and started off to execute his design; when, suddenly stopping and striking his breast, he added with emotion; "But at Talbois there is no Constance! Alas! I want but the same convictions as to her, and adieu both to man, and woman. But till then," added he, again striking his bosom, "I feel that nothing can unseat her here."

The result was a complete overthrow of his sudden resolution, and a determination not merely to remain in town, but, as diplomacy was at an end, to claim instantly the possession of his seat; and with this view he resolved to seek an interview with his uncle.

On his return to his lodgings, he was sur-

prised to find waiting for him a gentlemen whom he had never before seen, and who with many bows, and some awkwardness, requested a five minutes' confidential conversation, with him. At the words "confidential conversation," De Vere eyed his new guest with curiosity; for in fact he seemed dropt from the clouds. He was, at least in his appearance, unlike all others with whom he had ever had any thing like business. He was a portly man, with a florid cheek and large limbs. He wore his own brown hair in the formal curl and club of the time, but without powder, and combed very smooth over the forehead. His clothes were equally plain, consisting of a pepper and salt full suit, of very fine cloth, with black silk stockings, and silver buckles. His ornaments however, were a handsome cane, and a diamond ring, of both which he did not fail to do the honours by action, (of which he possessed a great deal,) while delivering what he had to say. De Vere, begging him to be seated, requested to know his business.

"Sir," said the stranger, after apologizing for his intrusion, "my name is Roebuck. I am told I speak to a gentleman of great abilities, as he is known also to be a man of the

highest family, and one who—who—who has no reason to be content with the usage he has met with from the new government."

"Proceed, Sir," said De Vere; reddening, and not either understanding or liking this exordium.

Mr. Roebuck's ease rather failed him, on perceiving that he had to deal with a man, who could in a moment pass from great civility to as great sternness.

"I hope I shall not offend you, Sir," continued Roebuck, with a smooth bow; "but indeed what I have to say, proceeds solely from my desire, (as it behoves me,) to do justice to all parties."

"And who and what may you be, Sir," said De Vere, raising his voice, "who have a right to do justice, where (by one party at least,) it has not been invoked?"

"Sir," returned Roebuck, "you see before you a man not at all unknown, I may say even to Europe; and indeed it has been said, not more emphatically than truly, that the directors of the press are a power of Europe themselves."

"Still, Sir," said De Vere, after waiting a pause, "I have to learn what is your precise

designation, and what has brought upon me the honour of this visit."

"I ought, indeed, sooner to have stated it," replied Roebuck, "but in truth, I supposed I might not be unknown to you, as I have the honour of being personally acquainted with most of the leading political characters of the day, who throng my shop, I may say, as much as Brooks's itself. In short, Sir, you see before you the publisher of all the most popular opposition tracts, whether in speeches, pamphlets, or poems, and as such, I believe I may say, one of the most powerful directors of public opinion in England."

De Vere lost his testiness at being so addressed, in his amusement at the man's foppery; and bowing low, said he was not insensible of the power and consequence of his visitor.

Highly flattered, Mr. Roebuck went on with more ease than before, and communicated to him, that by those invisible means by which vendors of politics pick up every thing, true or false, that is stirring in the world, he had heard that Mr. De Vere had been most grossly treated by the new minister, and even by his own family, purely and solely because he was a patriot. "Now, Sir," said Roebuck, "we, that is,

I mean, our concern, who are patriots ourselves, and derive our unexampled sales from our patriotism, think that we should only do right by offering you all the facilities of our press; should you wish to attack the new ministry, or expose the treachery you have met with from others nearer home."

"And in what way, Sir," replied De Vere, desirous of fathoming his real intentions, "am I to understand that you would have me do this?"

"Oh! Sir," said the bookseller, "it is not for me to prescribe to one, who, I am told, have first rate abilities, as well as so much cause to complain against certain persons. Only, as you naturally would wish to attack the measures of those who have personally used you so ill,—"

"Indeed, Sir," interrupted De Vere, "I naturally wish no such thing."

"What! not when they have tripped up the greatest man in the state,—Mr. Wentworth," replied the unabashed publisher, "and when they will, no doubt, break all their promises to this oppressed and gulled nation!"

"How do I know they will do this?" asked De Vere.

'Twas a question for which the opposition

publisher was not prepared, and had only taken for granted, *in the way of trade*.

"Well, Sir," continued he, "I only mean that *should* they do so, as they *certainly* will, we shall be happy to publish any pamphlet you may choose to write upon it; and I beg to say, it shall cost you nothing. Let me add, that if your hesitation proceed from a dislike to expose your name, means may be afforded by which, through anonymous paragraphs or letters, you might easily punish *any* particular person, whose ingratitude, or treachery to you ought to be visited without the inconvenience of entering into a public quarrel. In short, you might write him down, and be in safety yourself."

De Vere felt all his indignation roused at a hint so revolting to his sense of honour; and in a raised voice, and a manner not over agreeable to the astonished Roebuck, (who thought he had made the most simple, friendly proposal in the world,) asked upon what part of his character he had presumed to found a notion the most insolent and despicable he had ever met with.

"Oh! good Sir," cried Roebuck in alarm; "I ask ten thousand pardons. I am sure I did not mean to offend. I am sure I only meant

to oblige you in offering what I knew hundreds of gentlemen would be glad to accept."

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed De Vere; "I, at least, am not one of them; and had I any thing to revenge, it is fit you should know that, however I may respect the liberty of the press, I should hold myself dishonoured to form such an alliance with it."

"Dear me!" said Roebuck, "this seems a most extraordinary misapprehension; for I meant every thing friendly, and, as I told you, it should cost you nothing."

"Upon my word, Sir," replied De Vere, recovering from his indignation in his contempt, "your offer is a most generous one."

"I hoped you would think so," returned Roebuck, brightening up, "and I have only to give you my thanks for this important interview, and the kind confidence you have been so good as to repose in me."

De Vere now burst into laughter at the impudent conclusion the Director of public opinion had come to, and was about to reply, when with many bows, and hopes expressed that he should hear from him confidentially, the great political *terræ filius* took his leave, with the intention to publish to his shop, the con-

fiding and friendly footing on which he had been admitted by Lord Mowbray's nephew, and the expectations that might be reasonably formed of a severe philippic (in which the uncle himself, any more than his secretary, would not be spared,) against the whole policy of the government. This intention, on the part of Roebuck, De Vere did not know; and the whole thing was so new to him, that he allowed the political bookseller to slip away, before he could even attempt to undeceive him.

Such a report, however, when spread, could not but come round to De Vere, with all additions and authorities; and as the visit of the busy Roebuck could not be denied, and a conference without witnesses was not to be ascertained in exactness, it is strange with what annoyance to his feelings this seeming trifle was attended.

The report was mentioned to him by Flowerdale so cautiously, that it was evident he lent some credence to it.

"And you really think me already so corrupted by party," said De Vere, "even though I don't belong to one, as to attack measures which may be good, because I may have been

ill-used by the men who support them. When next you think so, think also I can rob, or cut a throat."

"You revolt at this," observed Flowerdale, "yet nothing so common. Some of the most powerful of our political philippics have come from the pens of friends turned into enemies, or confederates who have been refused their just expectations."

"Know me better, at least," said De Vere, with emotion; "nor believe a talking vendor of scandal, under the name of patriotism, whom every body laughs at——"

"And every body courts," added Flowerdale.

"Impossible!" said De Vere, with almost horror.

"Yet true," rejoined the Baronet.

"How can a gentleman be safe where there is such manœuvring?" asked De Vere.

"By manœuvring himself," said Sir William. "That is," added he, seeing him shocked, "by fighting with the same weapons; nor do I see why we should not use the press, as it is used against us."

"What! poison others because we ourselves have been poisoned!"

"'Tis the only way, and belongs to the mere system," said Flowerdale.

"Good God!" exclaimed De Vere, "to what are high characters reduced?"

"Shall I tell you? They must either wrap themselves in high virtues, and despise these attacks; which is somewhat difficult: or they must grow callous to them; which is not easy: or buy them off; which all cannot do: or play the same game themselves; which most think they *can* do."

"Any way then, we are at the mercy of the press," cried De Vere.

"Did not Mr. Roebuck tell you it was a power of Europe?" observed Flowerdale.

"But do you know any instances," asked De Vere, "of persons who could either despise or grow callous to falsehood?"

"A few," answered Flowerdale. "Some great minds think the press like the air, a chartered libertine, that blows on all it listeth; and, as for the callous, there is even Lord Eustace, already imbued so properly with this first quality of a public character in a popular state, that he thinks it a proof of merit to be abused."

"Roebuck, then, could have done nothing with *him*?"

"Oh yes! a great deal; by offering to puff him. Thus, one way or the other he holds King, Lords, and Commons in subjection."

"And what proof have you really of this?" asked De Vere.

"Why this: that, having no pretence whatever for it, but his types and his compositors; deriving little from fortune, less from birth, and least of all from education; he has set himself high enough to be an object of consideration, by means of this press, with persons who would not notice him without it. He talks to them *en égal*, and in some situations *en maître*."

"This last I cannot understand," said De Vere.

"You shall judge," answered Flowerdale, and he mentioned one of the most brilliant members of the House of Commons.

"This gentleman," continued the Baronet, "frequently published his own speeches;—requested to do so by Roebuck, as you have been. Anxious once to be particularly correct, he passed the whole morning at this hero's; and, being hungry, was agreeably surprised by a cold ham and bottle of wine. Thanking him for his liberality, the candid Roebuck told him it was but in common course. 'I once,' said he, 'asked

my old master, Cave, the secret of success in our profession.' 'Whatever you do,' said old Cave, 'remember always to *feed* your authors well:—and so Sir,' added Roebuck, 'I have ordered you a cold ham.' This to one of the most leading men in the senate!"

"And how did he take it?"

"He took the ham very cordially; and as for the comment, laughed it off at the time, and afterwards told it as a piece of impudence among his friends."

"This is a prostration worse than any you have yet told me," said De Vere; "nor had I a notion of such influence."

"In a free country like this," observed Flowerdale, "it is a part of the price we pay for our freedom; nor do I know any thing equal to the adventitious personal consequence of one who really can influence the press, except that of the confessor of the Romish Church."

"Yet the whole of what Roebuck has propagated of *me*, is false," said De Vere.

"The more likely to be swallowed," answered Flowerdale.

"I see not what public men have left for it," observed De Vere.

"Only one of the four alternatives I have

mentioned," replied the Baronet. "'Tis a severe tax, I allow," added he, seeing De Vere clouded with thoughtfulness; "but it is better than *lettres de cachet;* and, with all its disgusts, we do pretty well."

"I wish I had your phlegm," said De Vere.

"It might be of some advantage to your too great sensibility," observed Flowerdale. "Properly tempered, you might find the world not intended to be perfect; might love the good, see something bearable in the bad, and think it a happy world, after all."

CHAPTER XX.

A STORM AND A CALM.

Away with them! Let them be clapp'd up close,
And kept asunder.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.

SHAKSPEARE.

On De Vere's visit to his uncle, Lord Mowbray received the intimation of his wishes with surprise. He had heard with alarm of his nephew's explanations to the Minister, and his visit to his rival; and was disposed to read him a lecture on his rash determination to ruin himself. But this De Vere begged him to spare. As to Diplomacy, Lord Mowbray thought the career ought not to be abandoned; and, in that case, the question of the seat might stand over. To this, De Vere peremptorily objected; observing that he would make no more advances either to Lord Oldcastle or Mr. Wentworth,

but would maintain his own independence as well as he could.

"As to the advances to Mr. Wentworth," said Lord Mowbray, "I think you quite right. But a resolution to shun a first minister is very different. My dear Mortimer, I wish I could recommend to you a little of the prudence of your friend Clayton."

De Vere assured him it was the last example he wished to follow.

"You wrong him," said Lord Mowbray; "and I can tell you that, in the affair of the seat—I mean in the delay of resigning it—he has been much your friend."

De Vere stared,—observing drily, that that was above his comprehension. He added, that since Lord Oldcastle's justice had closed his diplomatic views, he knew not how delay could benefit his parliamentary object.

Lord Mowbray, though on the subject which he most understood (the management of a borough interest), now found he was engaged in a task surpassing his powers—that of explaining a very fraudulent transaction to a very straightforward understanding, so as to conceal the parts borne in it by its principal managers. He understood it, he said, imperfectly;

wished Clayton had been in the way; but, in short, there had existed for some time a conspiracy in the borough against the De Vere interest, so as to make any opening just now, with a view to one of that name, a matter of extreme danger.

"And has this conspiracy," asked De Vere, collecting all his coolness, "long been known to your lordship and Mr. Clayton?"

"To me," replied Lord Mowbray, "but a few months ago; to Clayton, I believe, longer; who did not inform you of it, only because he hoped to crush the revolt in its birth; and, at any rate, feared that your too high spirit might make things worse."

"I am infinitely obliged to him," observed De Vere.

"He is indeed a most prudent young man," replied Lord Mowbray, with some simplicity, "and I would advise you to consult him."

"That I will, wherever he is to be found," answered De Vere; and full of a tumult of thought, he, to his uncle's great relief, took his leave. He proceeded instantly to the House, where he rightly supposed this faithful friend to be, and called him forth by the following short note:—

"Things have been told me by my uncle, concerning the seat, which make it necessary I should see you directly."

The *parvenu* was by no means disposed to gratify him. He first turned scarlet, and then pale, and then secretly execrated Lord Mowbray as the worst of old fools; and to gain time (for thought at least), he returned for answer, that the debate was so near closing, as well as so critical, that he could not leave the House, but would wait upon De Vere the next day.

To his annoyance, this did not deliver him; for De Vere returned, in a second billet, that as he should set off for the borough that very night, he insisted upon seeing him that instant, and, possibly, upon his accompanying him. "I do not," said he, "exact this as a friend, but as a man of honour, eager, no doubt, in all minuteness, to comply with its call."

Clayton could no longer refuse, and, like a wounded snake, dragged himself slowly up the stairs, which he ascended with almost as much alacrity as a thief going to be hanged ascends the ladder. In short, rising as Mr. Clayton was esteemed, few of the votaries of self-interest, could they have looked into his mind, would at

that moment have thought him an object of envy.

The meeting was as decisive as it was short. " I suspend my final judgment," said De Vere, " for the evidence with which no doubt you will furnish me. Meanwhile it is but fair to tell you that I have the very worst suspicions; which, as a gentleman, (for it is mockery to call you a friend,) you are bound to dispel."

Clayton was appalled at his energy, which never seemed to have been so highly kindled; assured him he was wrong; promised to do any thing, and every thing, to clear his doubts, which to him were too painful to bear.

" Prove your sincerity," said De Vere, with an air of command, " by instantly accompanying me."

Clayton's heart fluttered, and he talked still of the debate.

" I will wait its close," answered De Vere.

" It will last all night," returned Clayton.

" Here is your billet," returned De Vere, " telling me the division was instantly expected."

The *parvenu* was abashed beyond recovery, and it ended in a promise to attend De Vere on his journey, at six o'clock the next morning.

"Provide your own chaise, however," said De Vere; "we shall be bad companions for one another."

This was, in effect, the greatest relief the *parvenu* could have hoped, and he said it would be the more convenient, as the presence of Mr. Blakeney, the town clerk, who, he knew, was in town, would be of the greatest advantage, and he might, therefore, travel with him. "No, Sir," said De Vere, "your own servant, if any, will be your only companion. As Mr. Blakeney may be of such use, and *I* am the person whom it is intended to injure, I will be the person to profit by his information."

This decisive resolution astonished Clayton, who had not given De Vere so much credit for penetration as he had for vehemence of character. It alarmed as well as astonished him; for Blakeney was in possession of secrets which it might not be quite convenient to disclose.

The devil, however, for this time stood his friend. Indeed, he is generally true to his vassals till the precise epoch for their destruction arrives. Blakeney was a coarse man, who affected to be nothing but what he was—devot-

ed to his own interest. He neither possessed, nor pretended to the feelings of a gentleman; and was therefore unassailable on that side. He would have cared little for betraying Clayton's operations, of which he had had the management, provided he could have got more from De Vere for letting out the secret, than from Clayton for keeping it. But as he knew De Vere had not the means of being a good paymaster, while Clayton's promises were on the eve of being performed, it was beyond the rhetoric of De Vere to obtain any thing from this faithful scribe of the Corporation, that could either betray the conspiracy or remedy its mischiefs. All, therefore, that De Vere learned was, that the majority of the electors, though owing their qualifications entirely to himself, had resolved to put themselves in the hands either of Lord Cleveland or Lord Mowbray, to the exclusion of the old family; all which Mr. Blakenay said he was ready to make oath, had been opposed by Mr. Clayton to the utmost of his power. And, in truth, it was all (except the last circumstance) sadly confirmed on their arrival at the borough. Here De Vere instantly commenced a canvass, in which he confided strangely in the

integrity of Mr. Blakeney, for direction as to the persons of most influence in the place, and most likely to give him true information as to the spirit of the voters.

But he insisted also on Clayton's supporting him; to which the latter, so far from refusing, with alacrity consented; and this imposed upon the loyal heart of De Vere, who almost repented of his suspicions. Nay, the meekness with which they had been borne, began to touch him with remorse; for nothing so keenly affects a kind and liberal heart as meekness in return for undeserved reproach. Never was any thing so true as that to a generous spirit, gentleness is the strongest of all enforcements.

When, therefore, De Vere, in his canvass, found himself warmly and promptly supported by Clayton,—who even renounced to their faces, the votes which numbers voluntarily tendered him in preference to De Vere; and when he heard the reason for this fairly asserted to be the incapacity of De Vere to provide for them—the mind of the latter became a sea of doubt, self-blame, and disgust. He longed to atone to his former friend for the injury he had done him, and was angry with himself for his

hasty harshness. But the mercenary corruption of the voters filled him with scorn. "I had hoped," said he, to some of them, "that the son of my father, who died for his country, would have been differently treated!"

"His dying will not make us live," said some of the churls; and De Vere turned from those who made the observation with a contempt which he did not even endeavour to conceal.

Clayton then stepped in, and professed that they leaned upon a shadow in hoping anything from him; for he could do nothing for them if he would, and certainly would not if he could, after such treatment of his friend. ("I am protected then, it seems, by the worthy member," thought De Vere.) To this many answered with shrewd nods and winks and shakes of the head, "We knows better—you are the boy, and not Squire De Vere, as makes the placemen."

De Vere gave the matter up, returned to his inn, and was upon the point of asking pardon of Clayton for his unjust suspicions, when a note was put into his hand, rumpled and soiled, but the direction of which was in a character that fluttered his heart. Hastily opening it, he found it was the writing of Constance, though

without a name, and contained these few words: "Put yourself in the hands of Mr. Mellilot; not of Mr. Blakeney.—Confide in this."

Greatly agitated, he asked for the person who brought the note, but he was gone. He therefore sallied forth alone, and inquiring the house of Mellilot, found him at his door. He was a fresh, open countenanced, but shy man, a small dealer in corn, and did the honours of a neat red-floored sort of kitchen-parlour with much heartiness. But though a temporary feeling would sometimes make him assert himself very warmly, a constitutional bashfulness prevented him, for the most part, from taking any active share in what was going forward; and Blakeney had denounced him as a man not to be depended upon.

Within his own dwelling, however, he seemed to have the ease as well as the comforts of a thriving country shop-keeper. He presented his wife to De Vere, a comely lass of about thirty, as neat and shining as the brasses that were ranged upon her dresser, or the bright andirons that ornamented a wide opening chimney, where were two corner seats, which in winter were the chosen abodes of warmth and comfort. The dame surveyed De Vere with great cu-

riosity; and having more loquacity than her John, (as she called Mellilot,) would have bestowed much of it upon him. She professed the warmest wishes for his success in his canvass;—in which, though sincere, she was perhaps actuated at least as much by jealousy of the Town Clerk's wife, who held her at a great distance, as attachment to De Vere.

Perceiving, however, that she was in the way, after a few civilities she opened a side-door, hung with cloaks and bonnets, and made her escape up a little blind staircase: which, however, she would not have done so soon, if she had not known that her John could keep nothing from her, but would disclose his whole conference with the Squire at night. With this praiseworthy, and indeed rare suspension of a woman's, and even a wife's curiosity, she busied herself in matters of domestic economy, above stairs, while the state affairs of the borough proceeded below.

The information which the honest corn-dealer had to give was soon developed; for John Mellilot had more honesty in his composition than words; and indeed, De Vere defrayed most of the conversation, by a proper adaptation of questions to John's favourite

monosyllables of yes, or no, to which he seemed glad to confine his answers.

To be short, De Vere learned, to his dismay, that within a very few months after Clayton's election, the Town-clerk Blakeney had begun to hold language new to the borough; to the effect that the Squire was a proud unyielding sort of a man, like his father—who would never support even his uncle in the government, and would never ask a favour for any one, but leave his constituents to starve; that Squire Clayton was the opposite of all this, and could do more by holding up a finger to Lord Mowbray, (who could do what he pleased at the Treasury,) than De Vere could ever manage in a thousand years; that it was beggary, therefore, to support the one—good wages and thriving to keep the other; that to be sure they derived their freeholds from the Squire—but all right was in the law, and what the law gave was their own, or they were all perjured when they came to take the oath. This being incontestable, it only behoved them, for the sake of their families, to consider who would be their best friend, Mr. Clayton or the Squire; and that no one could say they were ungrateful in this, since they

only transferred themselves from one part of the family to the other.

All this was opened by the Town-clerk, at first to his particular cronies in corners, over a pipe and mug, but afterwards in little knots of the borough politicians, assembled for the purpose. In these last, the scribe experienced much opposition, particularly from the older voters, who had held under the General, and swore it would be a disgrace to old English hearts to abandon his son. Mellilot was one of these, and was only prevented by his shy character from showing his zeal in very warm expressions of it; having been known to say, behind his counter, to a few private customers, that the Town-clerk deserved to be hanged, and Mr. Clayton, who had set him on, was little better. He carried his feeling indeed so far, that he had once nearly gone to the Castle, to blow them all up, as he said, by informing Lord Mowbray, who would no doubt, he thought, punish this treachery to his nephew. In fact, John actually did take some steps towards this, by acquainting his sister, Miss Mellilot, (who we may remember was Lady Constance's woman,) and who was entirely in the interest of the Squire, because,

as she said, he had the finest eyes, and whitest teeth, that ever were seen.

Upon the point of Clayton's interference, De Vere being very particular, he drew from John that he himself had once mustered up boldness enough to speak to the Secretary, "Who not then knowing," said John, "of what kidney I was, tould me Mr. De Vere was very indifferent about the parliament, and so long as the borough continued true to his uncle, he did not care, who had the seat. I own," added Mellilot, "I thout this were a bit of a lie, becase I had a letter from sister in my pocket, telling me how all the Castle expected your coming in, and that Mr. Clayton, for all he were at first no better than a clerk, and not so good as the steward, were as proud as Lucifer, and stingier than the steward himself."

De Vere, in his then state, was more grieved than surprised at this information; but was in one respect relieved from his painful doubts respecting the real character of his fellow-student. He also now discovered the clue, by which the kindness of Constance had been enabled to send him the important hint, which had led to this critical conference. For a correspondence, it seems, had been kept up between

the brother and sister; if correspondence it could be called, where the lady wrote four letters to one note, and the letters contained each four pages, while the note seldom exceeded four lines. Miss Mellilot, however, was a politician in petticoats, as well as many of her betters; and frequently wrote such things of what was now passing in London, as astonished the whole borough. For though, whenever a letter came, John was quiet about it, Mrs. Mellilot never went out without taking it in her pocket for the use of her neighbours; and, till it was completely exhausted, she was seldom at home.

The result was fatal to De Vere's present views; for, after a very special investigation of the state of the voters, and the little promise his canvass had afforded, (in all which, the zealous corn dealer gave too accurate intelligence,) he found that were Clayton to vacate, his own return would be the reverse of secure. While deliberating upon it, he received a note from Clayton himself; in which, after professions that made him sick, he assured him, not only that he was prepared to vacate, but would refuse to sit, if again returned. He was, however, so ill formed, he said, for

the unkindness of De Vere's suspicions, and likewise so much wanted by the Government in town, that he could not wait an interview; but was at that moment stepping into his chaise to return.

"'Tis for you, my dear sir," said the conclusion of the note, "to consider how far you will think it right to endanger the *family* interest, and exclude Lord *Mowbray's* influence, should I vacate, by the introduction of Lord Cleveland; whose agents are, I assure you, on the watch, and desire nothing better than a rupture between you and your uncle."

De Vere's astonishment at the cool impudence of this note, was only equal to his indignation. "Family interest!" exclaimed he. "Lord Mowbray! What family was ever known in this place but De Vere's? What Mowbray ever had footing here, but as his guardian, or the protector of an interest which has been so basely supplanted! Yes! Lord Mowbray! It is, indeed, your influence now, and much I fear

'Thou play'dst most foully for it.'"

He then reverted to what was said of Lord Cleveland, which he considered as a refinement

of finesse; and growing warmer and warmer, "Better," he cried, "it were ravished a thousand times by open force, than sapped by cunning and the hypocrisy of the devil. Yet that I should have given my heart to this man! this schoolfellow, whom henceforward I will trust as I would a fanged serpent."

He would have gone on, but grew ashamed of his vehemence, and exerted his self-control. Then, recollecting the billet of Constance, he pressed it to his lips, and in a subdued tone whispered to himself, "Yes! there is at least one redeeming flower that grows among these weeds—a flower without spot or thorn." And with this reflection, he suffered his mind to wander so sweetly to the kind watchfulness over his interest, which she had just shown, that his heart suddenly became softened. He thought of all her goodness—all her graces; forgot her present career; forgot his present anger; and forgot even Clayton himself, in the emotions which this unobtrusive proof of recollection inspired. Soft! sacred! and happy moments! How soothing to the sharpest vexations of even disappointed ambition! How enviable, whenever enjoyed! but ah! how few and fleeting in the life of man!

The effect of these tender sentiments did more for him than all his endeavours, from reason, to recover the tone of his mind. He dined by himself; was all the better for Clayton's retreat; and said he would give the rest of the day to deliberation; for which purpose he appointed Mellilot, and one or two others, to attend him. But he dined with Constance's billet open on the table, and pored over it more than upon the substantial fare that courted his appetite.

'Twas the month of May; the evening was serene and genial; and throwing up the window which opened upon the inn-garden, full of freshness from a gentle rain that had just fallen, his ear was caught by chirpings, and his eye by blossoms—the harbingers of Spring. The effect was calming to his nerves; and placing Constance's billet next his heart, he wandered out of doors, for a moment, as he thought; but pursuing the course of a little stream which led from the garden into the outskirts of the town, he insensibly commenced a long and devious walk, in which he thought only of Constance, and forgot that a committee of friends, appointed by himself, was at that moment awaiting his return. 'Twas a

strange absence of mind; but are we to blame the happy elasticity of heart which could expand itself with such soft and delightful feelings, the very instant after it had been contracted by a shock of passion. Assuredly not! The man who possesses it, is more enviable than he, who, without it, revels in thousands. Yet, it is not known at St. Stephens's nor St. James's; still less in the city, or Westminster Hall; seldom, indeed, in the business of life; never in its ambition. Let those, then, who enjoy, never stop to inquire where they found it, but hug it as a treasure, and never part with it. It will serve them as armour to prevent, or as a balsam to heal the lacerations which, in the warfare of life, the best of us are doomed to encounter.

The evening overtook him in a small hamlet, about a mile from the town. Here he had lingered in the twilight, till the twilight itself was sunk. The dews rose fast, and the sound of the village doors closing for the night, and lamp after lamp lighting up in the cottages, informed him, almost to his surprise, that the day was gone. It was then only that he recollected how much too late he must be for his appointment, and turned his steps back to the borough. Yet,

even then, he could not help stopping to inhale the perfume of the bean-flower, and to mark, with a painter's eye, the evening landscape before him. In truth, he loitered, spite of business, occupied with far other thoughts, nor minded the gaze of passing travellers, hastening to their shelter, or labourers going home from distant work, who wished him good-night, with respect, mingled with curiosity. Perhaps of all the scenes made pleasing from association, there is not one more interesting than the approaching thus to a small town, at the coming on of night, when the inhabitants are retiring to their little domiciles, to forget in happy quiet the anxieties of the day. How often have I myself stopped to watch figures reposing in the dusk, with no seeming enjoyment but of rest after bodily fatigue.

Yes! often have I stood to observe even children at play, till the very last tinge of light closed upon their sport; when I have still followed them through the open doors of their homes, and seen them and their families afterwards assembled at their simple supper, unconscious, or unmindful of being gazed at through their casements; alive only to their own little world, and careless of what might at that

moment be agitating a greater. Then, indeed, is the time for reflection on the true value of things, and the little efficacy of the proudest lot to produce one spark of pleasure more than was designed by the Father of all, for the meanest of his children.

But if this be the feeling of a mere casual observer, what must it be with the pilgrim who is wandering under a weight of care? He is peculiarly alive to it, and envies even the smallest appearance of quiet and shelter, of which he feels he stands so much in need.

At this moment, De Vere was such a pilgrim, and such were his reflections on re-entering his inn.

How different those of Clayton, now far on his return to the scenes for which he had sacrificed for ever the very power of making any moral reflection at all!

Escaped from the man he had betrayed, whose expected reproach he could not bear to think of, he was, on setting off, as happy, as relief from immediate danger makes the coward who dares not encounter it. But, like the coward, his terror continued long after the danger was over. He feared meeting De Vere in the town; he feared pursuit; he bribed the posti-

lion to drive fast, and pressing his hat over his face, shrank into the corner of the chaise, and remained immoveable for at least a mile. Then recovering a little, he stretched his neck out of the window, and perceiving he was not followed, began to indulge in reflections of a very different kind, for

"Ease will recant
Vows made in pain."

We do not know that Mr. Clayton made many vows, but he certainly was never more uncomfortable in his life, and *almost* wished he had never engaged in this work of treason.

We have often stated that he had feeling, and that he was alive for the moment to what was reported of him in the world. We say the world, because we are by no means positive that this extended to the whisperings of his own heart. At any rate, where his advancement was concerned, he was an admirable sophist; and on this occasion his sophistry admirably served him. At first, indeed, his treatment of his benefactor gave him a few uncomfortable twinges which his heart did not like. But he reminded himself that it was now too late, as

he had already felt and subdued those feelings, when first he had conceived and adopted his project, which it would be silliness now to abandon. He had paid the price of the odium of it, and it would be hard, indeed, to deprive himself of the profit. Then, as to the injury done to De Vere, it was but imaginary; for it was incontestable that he was not fit for parliament, and still less for office; and Mr. Clayton was therefore quite sure the time would come, when De Vere would thank him for having detached him so early from what was so little suited to his inclinations, in order to enable him to follow what was,—we mean leisure, letters, and mental refinement. He wound up with his duty and gratitude to Lord Mowbray, whose power and consequence he was thus augmenting, and who deserved from him, he thought, every service he could render, at whatever price.

With these happy reasonings and consolations, Mr. Clayton resumed his firmness, as the distance increased between him and the friend he had deceived. The borough he began now to consider as his own, perhaps for ever; and that thought brought on other visions of place

and power, and a life passed among the great, (perhaps even an alliance with them,) all of which was so pleasingly contemplated, that he wondered at the compunctions which had at first assailed him. By the time, therefore, that he had reached London, he began to think himself one of the powerful of the land, and that he had repaid all his obligations to Lord Mowbray; if indeed the balance did not now incline to the other side.

De Vere remained a day longer in the borough, concerting such measures as he thought most provident to restore his lost interest, during which, he received strong hints from Blakeney, that, upon certain conditions and compliances, the task would not be difficult. To this he replied with such scornful rejection, that the affronted Blakeney (who was a son of ambition too, in his generation) gave him fair notice he would make him repent it. De Vere smiled in contempt, at a wretch, who, he said, was too despicable for chastisement; and perceiving he had no hope of the seat at present, sat down to acquaint Lady Eleanor with his disappointment. He remembered the allusion to Francis I. made some years before by his friend

Herbert, when he defended the career of ambition against Harclai,* and thought the time was come, when he, too, might say to his mother, "Madam, we have lost all except our honour."

* See vol. i. p. 124.

CHAPTER XXI.

SUCCESSFUL MACHINATION.

How insolent of late he is become!
We knew the time since he was mild and affable,
And, if we did but glance a far off look,
Immediately he was upon his knee.

SHAKSPEARE.

On quitting London two days before, Clayton had only time to acquaint his patron, by a short billet, with the intention, and the impetuosity of De Vere. It was breakfast-time at Lord Mowbray's when he returned, and he found the earl and his daughter at table. Both were surprised at the suddenness of his re-appearance, and Lord Mowbray was so anxious to know the result, as not to take the numerous hints given by his Secretary, that they had better be alone before he unburthened himself. Lady Constance understood these hints no better than her father, and Clayton was therefore forced to answer (directly, or indirectly, as he found it

convenient,) all that was asked him, both by father and daughter.

The questions of Constance were so clear and penetrating, particularly in regard to Mr. Blakeney, that Lord Mowbray was surprised, and his confident a little dismayed, at her information. But when, with a very pointed look, she asked if he knew who had first kindled this spirit of revolt, and whether Mr. Blakeney had had no secret instigator, Mr. Clayton had nothing left for it but to deny all knowledge of the revolt itself, almost up to that moment. In proof of this, he said he had been so shocked by the ill usage of Mr. De Vere by the voters, that when he attended him in his canvass, and his fair rights were refused him, he had reproved them sharply, and positively refused for himself, to have any thing to do with them. So saying, to avoid pushing the subject, he made a pretence of searching for some papers in the library, to leave the room.

"My cousin then," said Constance, when he was gone, "is to be *protected* by this gentleman."

"I think," answered Lord Mowbray, "we are at least obliged to him, for his zeal for the *family* interest."

"I did not know that our part of the family had any share in the interest," observed Constance.

"It is surely all the same," said Lord Mowbray, uneasily; "but Mortimer has been sadly careless of it himself; and you see it may even be lost to Lord Cleveland, if Mr. Clayton do not stand forward."

"And is this Lord Cleveland's friendship?" asked Constance with some surprise.

"My dear Lady Constance," said her father, "ladies are not instructed in these matters; otherwise I would explain to you, that personal, and political friendships, are very different things."

"And which," pursued Constance, "in your lordship's opinion, is Lord Cleveland's?"

"At this moment," replied the earl, "both; but as no one knows how long our union may last, I own I cannot think him to blame for acting as if they might one day be divided. I would do so myself."

"And does this justify his interfering where he never yet had footing?"

"All is fair in politics, as in war," observed Lord Mowbray.

"And so my cousin, I fear, will find, not

merely in the instance of Lord Cleveland," replied Constance.

Lord Mowbray did not like the conversation, and repeated the observation that ladies were not instructed in these things; to which his daughter thoughtfully assented, and the breakfast was finished in silence, not to say constraint, on both sides.

To what was the puissant Earl—puissant in rank, birth, and wealth, and all that did not depend upon himself—to what was he reduced, when he felt relieved by his daughter's retiring from his presence? And what is there in the wayward mind of man to make him willing to forego the sweetness of a daughter's companionship, and lose the sweetness of a daughter's approbation for the hope of success in a despicable intrigue?

"Ill-weav'd ambition, how much art thou shrunk!"

Yet such is the character of the passion, if ill-directed, when it belongs even to nobler spirits, or in common course, when it actuates a meaner genius, that the dearest charities of our lives are sometimes set aside for power, or the supposed means of power.

On no other ground can we account for the

pleasure with which Lord Mowbray heard from Clayton that De Vere himself now felt the impossibility of his being returned. He indeed did not go so far as openly to approve the conduct of Blakeney; nor did he much like to inquire whether his daughter's surmise, that there was some secret instigator to this conduct, was well founded: he therefore allowed Clayton to wrap up that point in whatever obscurity he chose.

"When my nephew returns," said Lord Mowbray, "we will have a conference upon all this."

"I am sure your lordship will excuse my attending it," observed Clayton; "I can resent nothing against Mr. De Vere, but I am certain you will not desire me to subject myself to dishonouring suspicions."

"No, surely," returned Lord Mowbray, thoughtfully; "and yet he is so untoward, that I could wish not to have him singly upon my hands. It is astonishing how different he is from what his brother was in these respects."

"Suppose you were to consult your common friend, Dr. Herbert," said Clayton.

"An excellent thought," observed Lord Mowbray.

The Doctor was accordingly sent for, and

the whole affair laid before him, or rather concealed from him, in such glosses as Lord Mowbray and his Secretary chose to give it. Strange to say, he refused his assistance, or even advice; sheltering himself, by observing it was a family matter, in which the parties not only were the best judges for themselves, but the only judges.

In truth, the shrewd divine had too much penetration not to see that the whole was an intrigue, and a very scandalous one, of Clayton against his benefactor; and that Lord Mowbray, if he had not participated in its guilt, was at least not active in detecting it. The good Doctor's indignation was therefore raised against this calculating guardian and treacherous friend. He did not indeed go so far as Swift, who, when he was tricked out of a rich deanery by his patron, in league with his Secretary, exclaimed, in unrepressed anger, "G—d confound you both, for a couple of scoundrels!" but he could not conceal from Lord Mowbray himself, his opinion of the attempt; and he let Mr. Clayton know what he thought of his share of it, in a manner so bitterly sarcastic as to be by no means pleasant to that sensitive gentleman.

The genius of Clayton, indeed, was always rebuked by that of his late governor, whose eye

and dry remarks he never could stand. And as feeling and fine sentiment always made him miserable during the suffering moment, he hastened from the Doctor's presence on the present occasion, as soon as he could form a specious excuse for it.

When gone, Herbert had still to sustain the complaints of Lord Mowbray against the impracticability of De Vere upon all points; and particularly his most unheard-of awkwardness of confession before the first Minister, in the very moment when he was charging himself with pushing his fortune in diplomacy. The particulars of all this he detailed, and Herbert listened with marked interest.

"It seems then," said the Doctor, at the close of the conversation; "that this untoward boy, as your lordship still calls him, sacrificed himself before Lord Oldcastle, to a silly honesty, in confessing his partiality to his late colleague."

"Indeed he did," replied Lord Mowbray; "and I cannot tell you how it has vexed me.

"It would vex any politician alive," said Herbert, as he took his leave, and hastened to Mr. Wentworth himself.

CHAPTER XXII.

RECONCILIATION.

And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but 's honoured for those honours
That are without him; as place, riches, favour,
Prizes of accident, as oft as merit.
SHAKSPEARE.

HERBERT's theories were, as we have seen, in favour of practical exertion; and his caution was habitual in guarding young men against the imprudence of self-sufficiency, which many worshipped under the name of *proper* pride, but which, in his way, he used to call proper nonsense. But he was as alive as any man to true honour and independence of character. His regard for De Vere had increased with his respect; and though he had done what he thought necessary, when too jealous a spirit required the curb of friendly experience, there were points in which he wished more young men of his acquaintance resembled De Vere. He preached

as much against the *compromising*, as the *uncompromising* spirit. He laughed at the silly irritability of those whose pride had nothing to support it but self-consequence. But he had the most sincere respect for real dignity of mind; and, allowing for some little jealousy of temper, such he thought was De Vere's.

But Mr. Wentworth had complained to him, that even De Vere had been as fickle as the rest of his followers, and had sold himself to Lord Oldcastle for a mission abroad. Herbert was incredulous to obstinacy; Mr. Wentworth insisted; and they separated, unable to agree.

Lord Mowbray's account, therefore, was as satisfactory as the Doctor could have hoped; and the extinction of De Vere's views, hastened by his being seen by Lord Oldcastle coming out of Mr. Wentworth's house, not only furnished him with a complete defence of his young friend's fidelity, but with a strong claim upon the Ex-Minister's gratitude.

Thus armed, he changed the whole state of Mr. Wentworth's feeling, by a simple relation of facts. For such is the nature of true greatness, that simplicity is ever its favourite companion. Rhetoric is thrown away upon it, even if it is not calculated to disgust and revolt

it. Truth, unvarnished truth, is all that it requires to make it decide rightly, whatever may be the embarrassments thrown in its way, even by its own prejudices.

Doctor Herbert sought not, therefore, by any art to advocate the return of Mr. Wentworth's confidence in De Vere's honour. Nor was he wrong:

> "He what was honour knew,
> And understood his pleaded reason."

Mr. Wentworth, in short, with feelings as glowing as his abilities, was a proof (whatever may appear to the contrary in this story) that there may be minds incorruptible by power, and which have preserved their simplicity, unhurt by the atmosphere of dissimulation in which they live, and uninjured even by the blaze of their own reputations. If ever the famous antithesis in the epitaph on Gay, was applicable to any other person, it surely was to him.*

The task, therefore, undertaken by Herbert, was, as we have said, of little or no difficulty;

* "In wit a man, simplicity a child."

and the few minutes required for this perfect reconciliation, recalled to his mind the observation which Sir William Temple made with so much happiness on the ease with which he had effected the triple alliance, that it was difficult to draw things out of their centre, but to make them return, Nature helps so far "that there needs no more than just to set them a going."

Herbert, therefore, was prepared with a happy greeting for his friend, on his return from his voyage of electioneering discovery—so happy, that it soothed some at least of the mental wounds which De Vere had sustained in his endeavours to sound the depths of political friendships, and the gratitude of an ambitious *parvenu*.

The contempt with which the whole transaction concerning the seat, together with all the actors in it, were viewed by Mr. Wentworth, and the virtuous indignation excited in his mind, by the conduct of Lord Oldcastle, only attached De Vere more and more to his person. And, as De Vere's attachments or resentments were the last things he made any attempt to conceal, he was every where set down as having enlisted in the party of Opposition, of which Mr. Wentworth was expected to become the active and distinguished leader.

This was immediately turned against him by his former friends, and most efficiently, though most secretly, by Clayton, whose cause it served. De Vere was every where represented, upon the hints furnished by the *parvenu*, as a renegado to his family and his party, and, what was worse, from motives of resentment and self-interest, because he had failed in his views on a particular diplomatic mission, which he had *solicited*.

This report was called in his own warm language, by Mr. Wentworth himself, when he had occasion to allude to it in the House, a calumny as false and pitiful as the breast in which it originated,—an observation which immediately drove the *parvenu* from behind the Treasury bench, to the last seat under the gallery, whence he did not stir that night.

Nevertheless, the report, false as it was, served for a while the turn intended. It diverted the world from any keen inquiry into the affair of the seat; which, for the most part, it was supposed Mr. Clayton had been obliged to hold against his will, by the absolute command of Lord Mowbray, who had family claims upon it. These claims, it was said, he had been driven to assert, in consequence of the fickle and self-interested conduct of his nephew, who, from

disappointed vanity in not being duly appreciated by the Premier, had thrown himself into the arms of the Ex-Minister, and thus joined the Opposition, only because he could not form a part of the government.

Few people inquired farther; and no wonder, therefore, if the greater part of the world thought that Lord Mowbray was only right in defending himself against the rebellion and ingratitude of his nephew, and pitied poor good Clayton, who was not allowed to vacate the seat as he wished, but was a martyr to his difficulties in acting between his early friend, and his powerful patron.

And thus it fares sometimes in the world; and thus are the world's children often permitted to circumvent and triumph over those of a far higher cast of character. It was such fatality no doubt that made the master of nature break out in that fearful prophecy,

> "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

The consequence was all he wished to the prosperous Mr. Clayton,—who thus contrived to enlist Lord Mowbray and the Minister himself, against the object of his treachery, and

who gave himself the air of a resigned, but ill-used person. In the latter, he was joined by Lords Cleveland and Eustace; who, from their former intimacy with De Vere, were at least supposed to understand the affair, and, who having, without inquiry persuaded themselves, easily persuaded others, that De Vere's conduct in the separation that took place, had been the effect of disappointed pride; their own, of self-defence.

The consequence was a rupture in form. They passed De Vere without speaking in the streets; talked of him as a man who had ruined his own hopes, and were treated by him in return with coldness and disdain.

Inquiry, however, did not make him unjust. Those who knew the history of Clayton, and who themselves hated him for his arrogance, did not now check their hostility towards him in the presence of De Vere, some of them thinking even to make themselves agreeable to him, by indulging their own resentment against the private Secretary. But De Vere refused this unction to his supposed cause of complaint. Once, in a mixed company, a talking man, meaning to please him by it, used the phrase "his shameful ingratitude towards you." "Permit me to

stop you," said De Vere. "As I have never complained, no one has a right to impute to him wrongs towards me, which I do not impute myself."

In this high tone of independence, though his hopes seemed blasted, De Vere still presented himself to the world, nor ever lost that dauntless front of integrity, which an unsuccessful, if a weak man, sometimes permits to be ravished from him, but of which no man of spirit can ever be deprived.

But the world was changed to him. His fortune did not suffice for his rank; his advancement was evidently stopped; and his parliamentary views, for a long time, if not for ever, extinguished.

How different this, from the high and rising young man of great expectations, who, from his family interest, and personal character, was to achieve whatever he pleased.

Oh! the folly of a rash, hot-headed youth, who, courted by fortune, throws himself away! Such he was judged now by the world, for such he had been openly represented by the successful party. While on the other hand, the cautious and never erring prudence of the low-born Clayton, had reaped their reward, in the actual

advancement he enjoyed, and the great views which opened to him for the future. All his machinations had succeeded; and thus it might be said, when the situation of the two men were compared,

> "An eagle towering in his pride of place,
> Was by a mousing owl, hawk'd at and kill'd."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A REPULSE.

> Alas! thrice gentle Cassio,
> My advocation is not now in tune;
> My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him,
> Were he in favour, as in humour altered.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

AND was the Lady Constance silent or indifferent at the depression of her cousin? We have failed in our delineation of her mind, if it can be thought that she was. In fact, she pushed remonstrance as far as she dared, with an indulgent father, upon the usage of De Vere at the borough. Lord Mowbray, with evident uneasiness, told her, as usual, that a woman could know nothing of these matters, and that it was even incompatible with her delicacy to meddle with them. She allowed it might be out of her province, but offered to furnish demonstrative proof that the whole was a conspiracy between

Clayton and Blakeney, to destroy De Vere, and profit by his spoils.

Lord Mowbray had been prepared for this by Clayton, who had asked and obtained the protection of his patron against what he called an intriguing woman, in the person of Miss Mellilot. Her influence with her lady, he said, he dreaded, particularly as she represented the party adverse to what he now openly called (and was not checked for it) the Mowbray interest in the borough. In return, Lord Mowbray thought he could do no less than support his zealous protégé against all intriguing persons whatever. Nothing, therefore, could be so unwelcome as this attempt of Constance to alter the face of affairs in the borough; which, he said, were, upon the whole, as smooth as could be expected, and which it might be dangerous to change.

The Lord Mowbray was a man of maxims, and among many which he was fond of quoting (not always with too great anxiety for the correctness of their application,) " Stare super antiquas vias," or, as he translated it, " Let things alone," was as much his favourite, as the word " innovation" had always been his terror. This maxim he did not fail particu-

larly to inculcate, now that it served him as an answer sufficient, he thought, to an attempt on his daughter's part which was most unwelcome.

"And yet," said Constance, with gentle perseverance, "Mr. Clayton did not remember this maxim, when, for the first time these hundred years, an interest was set up in the place, adverse to my uncle's family, though favourable, he says, to ours."

"Lady Constance," said Lord Mowbray, with anger on his brows; "you know nothing of what you are saying; nothing of the real state of things; and, in particular, nothing of politics."

"But I hope, my dear father," replied she, "I can distinguish what is wrong in a dark affair, and may be allowed to bring it to light. I hope, too, I may be permitted to feel for an injured relation, who has been sacrificed to a dishonest scheme of advancement by a treacherous friend."

Lord Mowbray now waxed wrath, and, assuming all the dignity of which he was capable, "If you mean," said he, "Mr. Clayton, by your most unjustifiable innuendo, he is the injured party, you the injuring; for he has done

all in his power with me to permit him to lay down the seat, in the fear of this very surmise. And this I tell you, to show you how incompetent as well as indelicate a young lady is, when she travels out of her sphere to meddle with what does not belong to her. My nephew is, I am sorry to say, an overbearing and impracticable person, and he has used Mr. Clayton ill by his suspicions; though Mr. Clayton returns nothing but meekness for his affronts."

Constance thought of the meekness of the wolf, and would have continued to sue for inquiry in favour of her cousin. But it was the suing of Desdemona for Cassio, when the mind of Othello had been poisoned. Nay, her perseverance, though modestly firm, and set off by reasoning, only inflamed her father more, in proportion to the little reasoning he had to oppose to it; till at length he lost all power of reply, and for the first time in his life, commanded her from his presence.

The effect of this upon a gentle heart, which had never yet received a check from any one, much less from a person it loved, was calamitous to the happiness of Constance. Though there was nothing in Lord Mowbray to command any very high respect for his character,

even in his child; still he had ever been as indulgent to her, as a cold and stiff nature would permit. He was proud of her as a daughter, and showed his pride by acts of such apparent kindness, that her affection was easily won. She opened not her eyes to her father's defects, but gave him as much dutiful love as a man of much higher wrought feelings could have desired. She was therefore seriously and grievously wounded by the severe repulse she had just sustained.

It was the hour of dressing—her toilette was spread, and its *recherche* would have brought Belinda and all her sylphs to the mind of any one who viewed it. Miss Mellilot was, indeed, the only visible sylph in waiting, and had spent a most agreeable half hour while expecting her lady, in admiring the rich dress which she had intended that evening to wear, at a grand ball given by Lady Clanellan. What was her surprise when her lady entered, with a pensive and melancholy countenance, which she did not even attempt to conceal. Miss Mellilot, to her astonishment, and not much to her pleasure, was, for a time, dismissed, and when summoned again, instead of orders to begin the charming process of dressing, (in which the maid some-

times takes as much pleasure as the mistress,) she received a note, with directions to send it instantly by a footman to Lady Clanellan. 'Twas an excuse from the ball; and Lord Mowbray dining out, Constance spent the whole evening alone.

At first she intended to pass it in reading. But the books she opened were De la Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, and these gave her no pleasure; for she was too little in humour with mankind much to disagree with them, and their views were not so favourable as to restore happiness to her reflections on the world, supposing these to have been what principally occupied her. But her fears of having offended her father, and that she might, as he said, have exceeded the delicacy of her sex in interfering between two gentlemen, were the real causes of her distress. She could not bear to think that she had departed from the modest dignity of a woman, in thus invading, as Lord Mowbray charged her with doing, the province of men. And her sense of duty to a parent was, at any rate, such, that to have excited his anger, who never before had been even displeased with her, not only dismayed but weighed down her heart. It was a heart which,

however buoyant of late, with excitement, was formed to find happiness only in the fulfilment of duty and the cultivation of affection. At the same time, the zealousness of her nature, where justice was so outraged and hypocrisy had been allowed such a triumph, hardly permitted her to think she had been wrong. She had offered to her father true information,—the only thing she supposed he could need to make him interfere with a high hand, where common right seemed so much to demand it. And if to this common right she added, without knowing it, a little more than common interest for the person most concerned, it derogated nothing from the sincerity of her feeling. The feeling would have been the same in quality, though, perhaps, not in degree, had an unknown person been the injured party,—of such elements was this generous girl composed.

As it was, she was plunged in affliction; and her distress at Lord Mowbray's displeasure, was not relieved by general meditations on the falsehood of worldly friendships, the success sometimes of the designing over the single of heart, the inanity of ambition, or the inefficacy of gaiety to produce happiness.

These reflections lasted deep into the night;

nor could Constance lie down till she had, in an affectionate and submissive billet, expressed her concern at having displeased her father,—whose forgiveness she asked in terms as if her offence had been of a far more serious kind.—Yet, for all this, she was anxious, and even unhappy, and rose at the earliest dawn to behold through her unclosed windows, the colours which began, though faintly, to crimson the east. The birds were already busy in the gardens of the square, and the budding green of the foliage was fresh and cheering. "It is spring," said she, "and we shall soon leave this tumultuous life, so different from all that it promised."

It would be doing Lord Mowbray injustice to say he was not softened by his daughter's contrition. It flattered his self-consequence to receive excuses, and hear pardon begged, by one of whom he was so proud. He had secretly felt too, that he had himself been in the wrong; and the whole affair of the borough was of too equivocal a nature, even to himself, to give him much desire to sift what, if left in obscurity, would also leave him in convenient ignorance. The submission of Constance was therefore, on every account, as gladdening to *his* heart as

his ready forgiveness was comfortable to *her's*. She had, however, still one step farther to go, before she could be satisfied.

Of all her virtues, perhaps the purest was the perfect candour of her mind, which felt concealment as it would disgrace. To fear a disclosure was an insupportable bondage to her; and she was therefore not easy till she had herself made a confession, that she had not discouraged her woman Mellilot, from acquainting her with the particulars with which she was supplied by her brother. And she farther informed him, of her own consequent intimation to her cousin, to beware of Blakeney.

Lord Mowbray received this account with more surprise than pleasure; but he had been too recently mollified by her submissions, to relapse into anger. Contenting himself, therefore, with exacting a promise from her, never again to invade the province of men "by interfering in politics," (which was favourite language of his,) he gave her all she wanted, an assurance that she was completely restored to his affection. It followed, however, that what she had promised, was not to be performed by halves; and she took the very first opportunity of being alone with Miss, (or rather Mrs. Mel-

lilot, as she was called,) to forbid her making any farther communications of the affairs of the borough. Thus, to the astonishment, and we may add consternation, of that *talented* young lady, her mistress seemed to abandon the place, and, what is more, her cousin's interest in it, to the enemy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EARLY RECOLLECTIONS.

Give sorrow words; the grief that will not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break.
SHAKSPEARE.

IT may be supposed that what had weighed so heavily upon the mind of Constance, was not withheld from her aunt, or her friend Lady Clanellan. One part, indeed, of the constitution of our nature is, for the most amiable purposes, so ordered, that the communication whether of grief or joy to a person we love, assuages the one and brightens the other.

Constance had no grief, but she had troubles; and, while all the world supposed she was the queen of pleasure as of fashion and adored her as such with boundless devotion, she was internally, to her own astonishment, fatigued in spirit, and unsatisfied in mind.

"What a gay life is yours!" said a young friend to her one day, while every one was ad-

miring her; "what a light heart!" The observation immediately banished the smile that had prompted it; for, as she afterwards told Lady Clanellan, she had smiled at nothing, and her heart at that very moment was as heavy as lead.

"You are a most extraordinary girl," said Lady Clanellan, "and could the world see into that little mind of yours, you would be set down either as having lost your senses, or as never having had any to lose."

"The world would be but right," observed Constance.

"A fit of sentiment," continued Lady Clanellan, "comes over you, because you are afraid of papa, and in consequence you refuse to come to my ball, which was given almost on purpose for you. There were I don't know how many peers of England, counts of France, and princes of the Holy Roman Empire, all watching the door for your arrival, and all going away angry with me for their disappointment. Do you think I can forgive this?"

"My dear Marchioness, if you knew——"

"If I knew what? I am sure I know enough. There is a Duke on his knees, or who would be so to you, every day of his life, if you would

let him; yet you turn away with almost disdain. There is a magnificent earl, who says you are as cold as a lump of ice, and would be fit only for a milk-maid, even if you were warmer. There is a——."

"My dear kind friend," interrupted Constance, "spare me, I beseech you! I am not in spirits for raillery."

"And what are you in spirits for?" replied the Marchioness, changing her tone, and kissing her cheek; "Is there any thing in this little heart of yours which is pent up, and wants relief? If there is, why let it show itself, and we will see what can be done to give it ease. Believe me, dear Constance, to see *you* grave makes *me* melancholy; for if you were really unhappy, I could never be at ease. But confidence, where you can so repose it, will relieve you much."

"I am sure it will," answered Constance, leaning her head on her friend's shoulder; "but I have really nothing to confide, except what will perhaps surprise you as much as it does myself—that I was happier in Languedoc than I have ever been since we left it."

"What!" replied Lady Clanellan, "in those formal old gardens of Esparbez; with nobody

to speak to but a stiff President or two of the Parliament of Toulouse, or an old General des Armées du Roi?"

"I had you, and Lord Clanellan," said Constance.

"And a pretty couple we were!" returned the Marchioness: "I an invalid, and he little better than a farmer who knew how to read; which was more than we could say of all our neighbours."

"With all this, I was happy," said Constance.

"And not now?"

"Alas! no; and what is worse, I cannot tell why. I seem to have a fever on my spirits."

"Yet, if flattery could sooth——"

"Alas! it makes me sick. I am insulted with compliments all day long. I am deified in prose and verse, by persons who know nothing of me, and whose praise would be of no value if they did. I am dragged, or drag myself, from one show to another, where the eye is excited by dazzling brilliancy, but without one satisfying thought to accompany it. In short, there is no mind any where in those about me; all is masquerade: and I hate the name of mas-

querade, since that unfortunate one at Bellamont House."

Lady Clanellan, who knew and respected the deep impression which the adventure there had made upon Constance, and had done all she could to heal a spirit hurt to the quick by the liberties which had been taken with her, now desisted from her rallying tone, and in the gentlest manner asked her if she had any thing on her mind.

"Not positively," said Constance; "but I am too little pleased with my life to be at ease. As to what I do in public, I feel myself a mere puppet of fashion, and, what is worse, sought after as a mere instrument of party politics. Yet I feel only humbled by being thought a party woman—no very amiable character in itself; and one who, before she can shine, must learn to be at least an actress, if not to forget her sex."

"That will my Constance never do," said Lady Clanellan kindly; "but you have your own private moments, your own private thoughts and resources, and surely never was any young person so entirely her own mistress."

"Nothing so seemingly true, so really false," replied Constance. "The silly flattery I meet

with would make me think myself a queen—the constraints of my life show me I am a slave. How different from this was even that old chateau of Esparbez, which you pretend to ridicule, but which yet you liked."

"Strange," said Lady Clanellan, laughing, "that so gay an heiress should even remember such a piece of monotony!"

"I have told you I am not gay," replied Constance, gravely; "and very sure I am, to be an heiress, is not in itself to be happy. Then, as to monotony, I begin to doubt, however you may laugh at me, whether it is not capable of yielding more real contentment, than the most splendid variety."

"You, who have so much experience," said the Marchioness, still smiling at her, "must be right."

"And have I not experience?" returned Constance. "Was I not happy at Esparbez, and—am I happy here? As to the monotony of Esparbez, while it was giving *you* health, what did I require? But it also gave me, what is so good for every one, but particularly a wild young girl, such as I then was, the habit which you, dear Marchioness, so kindly fostered, of making home happy, by turning the

most trivial things into lessons of instruction. While this prevailed, how did the hours fly!"

"Dear Constance," said the Marchioness, changing to seriousness, "I remember full well how my Lord and I admired you, for taking so rationally to that solitude, and dispelling all its gloom by the sunshine of your own mind. Yet you were then as unknown to the world, and as ignorant of it, as your own doves of which you were so fond. How does it happen that things are so changed?"

"It was this very ignorance, I believe," replied Constance, "that made me happy. The doves you mention, had not a wish beyond their cage, nor I beyond mine. The little studies, in which you and Lord Clanellan engaged me, improved me, or, what is the same thing, made me hope I was improving. This was every thing: for though there was no variety but what we made for ourselves, every little diversion which we did make, became an episode of pleasure. Such was the mere raising of a primrose, or even a salad in my own garden; but particularly a ride in the evening in that sweet climate, while Lord Clanellan drove you in his calash: and then to return to a home where

every thing was void of care, and the birds sung me to sleep ——"

"*Fi donc*," interrupted the Marchioness; "what would be said of you at the court ball to-night, if this were overheard?"

"*Fi donc*, or not," replied Constance, "I can safely say, that in spite of all I am envied for, I have neither been so happy, nor, I am afraid, so innocent, since the days we have been calling to mind."

Strange to say, the eyes of Constance, and a deep sigh which she breathed, showed how much she was moved by these unfashionable recollections.

"Nay, now!" exclaimed Lady Clanellan; "I shall begin to scold, or send for Lord Cleveland to quiz your pretty simplicity. For Heaven's sake! dear Constance, wherein have you departed from the innocence I have always loved in you, as your brightest jewel?"

"In the total loss of my time," replied Constance; "in appearing always as if upon a scene; in letting hour after hour go by without one self-approving action, or even thought. How different from this, when I used to quit your bedside of an evening, at that peaceful

Esparbez, happy to think that my little nursing had made you feel easier, and that the return of health would soon be at hand."

"My dearest Constance," said the Marchioness, now in her turn greatly affected, "how can I ever love you sufficiently for all this, or tell you, notwithstanding my raillery, how I join in your recollections of that dear old place, where the recovery of health set off every thing with delight, and all that we said or did, seemed a feast of love."

At these words, these two amiable women embraced, nor did the difference of their ages seem to make any difference in the affection with which they regarded each other, or in the feeling which the remembrance of the old scenes of their happiness together had called forth. Indeed, there was always something in the manner and looks of Lady Clanellan, that shed a charm over every thing she said or did, and banished every notion of age. The *fond* of her character was a most serious rectitude, which might have been called severe, but that all appearance of severity was softened, if not lost, in the cheerful nature of her goodness. Hence, she was always surrounded by young people, who gave their hearts to her as to one of their own age,

and few were the secrets they could conceal from her. Her great love for Constance, therefore, made her seriously anxious to trace out, (which she knew she could easily do,) whether any thing really lay at her heart. But except that that heart had a void in it, which not all her splendid occupations, all her brilliant pleasures, nay, even her friends and admirers, could fill, and that this void created languor, self-blame, and indifference to every thing that surrounded her—the Marchioness could discover little real disease of mind.

Yet with so much goodness, so many accomplishments, so much aptitude for natural happiness, and with all the appliances of the world to boot,—that the world should fail in satisfying her, both moved, and baffled conjecture. At the same time, the Marchioness observed that by far the most preponderating interest with Constance, was the conduct of her father, in allowing Clayton to unseat her cousin Mortimer.

This was, in effect, the original cause of her distress, from its having drawn down the displeasure of Lord Mowbray, and excited her fears that she had departed from her duty as a daughter, and, perhaps, even from the *retinue*

of a delicate woman. In this, therefore, she required all the assurances of her friend that she had not overstepped decorum, or the duty of her situation. She, indeed, could hardly accept the unhesitating approbation which the Marchioness bestowed upon her endeavour to defeat what she called the scandalous conspiracy of Clayton to defraud an honourable man of his right; and she compromised the matter by averring that, as she interfered only from the supposition that Clayton could not be approved by Lord Mowbray, so she must now suppose herself wrong, and abandon her cousin altogether.

Lady Clanellan, however she might lament the circumstance, could not but applaud her rectitude; and with this assurance, little consoling as it was, this soft-minded girl took leave of the subject, and of her friend, to dress herself in smiles, and preside at a dinner of twenty covers.

Here her fine manners made their usual impression, and she was set down, even by the serious, as a glass in which all young women might dress themselves; by the careless as a high-fortuned mortal, who could not have a

care. And thus we might see confirmed the moral thought of a quaint old strain.

"Though with forced mirth we oft may soothe a smart,
What seemeth well may not be well, I ween;
For many an aching mind and burning heart,
Hid under guise of mirth is often seen."

CHAPTER XXV.

A DUEL.

The noble Brutus
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious:
If it were so, it were a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Cæsar answered it.
SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE what we have just related was going on in the little world of thought which constituted the mind of Constance, an awful event happened in the greater world that surrounded her, which fixed the public attention, plunged many into grief, and afforded a fearful lesson to all.

Among the few friends who did not desert Mr. Wentworth on the late changes, was a person of whom, though we have had no occasion hitherto to mention him, the nation had on a variety of accounts conceived the highest hopes. Son of a man, in family and fortune of the first consequence in the state, and thus

favoured by birth and wealth, he was equally favoured by nature from his genius and attainments. He had the gift of eloquence superior to all his contemporaries, save Wentworth alone; and his high heart, though touched strongly with ambition, was filled with sincerity, and also with a sensibility, which was always ready to overflow. These qualities, however, strange as it may seem, betrayed him sometimes into what, in the minds even of persons far his inferiors, gave an air of weakness to some parts of his conduct: for he more than once had been made the victim of an overweening confidence in men whom he had trusted, but who proved not trustworthy; and his sensibility was so keen to every thing, right or wrong, which could affect his reputation, that his fancy often conjured up spectres appalling to his happiness. On such occasions, he was, unfortunately, so hasty that no one could answer for consequences. These were his faults, and dearly did he answer them.

The English, however, of all nations on earth, are calculated to love and adopt such a character as their own; and, accordingly, from his first entry into public life, Mr. Beaufort inspired his countrymen with the warmest in-

terest for his success, and the firmest reliance upon his patriotism.

Nor were they wrong, for had there been a question between the interests of his country and his own, even had his life been the alternative, he would not have hesitated which to prefer.

To De Vere's great delight, there reigned the purest harmony between this gentlemen and Mr. Wentworth. Their admiration was mutual, and no jealousy had hitherto sprung up, like a mildewed ear, to blast their hopeful alliance. Mr. Beaufort, with all his ambition, and distinguished as he was, had willingly submitted to the higher fortune of his friend, and successfully fought under him as his lieutenant, with a loyalty that was unblemished.

We may suppose, that to a minister of Lord Oldcastle's penetration, the acquisition of such a man, when he had determined to separate from his former colleague, was every way of the highest consequence. Of value as a support to himself, to detach him from being the support of his antagonist became of tenfold importance; and accordingly, no attempt was left untried to obtain him. But Mr. Beaufort was above all the temptations of power or wealth which Lord Oldcastle could offer.

Both his principles and his engagements devoted him to the ex-Minister. He had attended the meeting at Mowbray House, and that he had done so, was all the answer he condescended to give Lord Oldcastle, when the latter applied to him in person, or through the numerous agents, direct and indirect, whom he afterwards employed. Happy had Beaufort been equally firm against the sway of all other feelings and mistaken notions, as he was against temptations which applied themselves only to his interest.

Mr. Wentworth, at this time particularly, had distinguished himself upon one of those questions involving the personal character and conduct of the actors concerned, which, whenever they occur, excite the feeling and interest of the nation to an absorbing degree.

After developing, with warm indignation, the intrigues to which he would not stoop, but to which, he said, he had fallen a sacrifice, he unmasked the views of his opponents, particularly of the Minister himself, with a force of honest invective which made them tremble; and he drew a comparison between *them,* in their success from such arts, and *himself*, in his failure from the want of them, which left them

in possession of no superiority over him in the minds of his auditors.

But he gained all hearts when he wound up with a dignified and philosophic description of the sort of ambition he courted, and the fortune which alone he followed; welcome, he said, if virtuously attained; despised, if offered at the expense of virtue. This sentiment he classically clothed in a beautiful passage from his favourite author, with which, when he closed his speech, he seemed to electrify the House:—

"Laudo manentem; si celeres quatit
Pennas, resigno quæ dedit, et mea
Virtute me involvo, probamque
Pauperiem sine dote quæro."*

The eloquence of this harangue, particularly of the last sentiment, was cheered by all Mr. Wentworth's hearers; by none more than

* Thus given by Francis, speaking of Fortune:—

"I can applaud her while she stays;
But if she shake her rapid wings,
I can resign, with careless ease,
The richest gifts her favour brings;
Then folded lie in Virtue's arms,
And honest Poverty's undowered charms."

by the enthusiastic Beaufort. Alas! it was the last cheer he ever gave.

Mr. Wentworth's party had already visibly increased; and the high ground which Lord Oldcastle had taken, seemed, insensibly to others, but obviously to himself, to be slipping from under him. With all his talents, he was not a bold politician, and he felt it was absolutely necessary either to create jealousies in the opposite party, so as to disunite their strength, or to abandon his post to Wentworth, who he knew would accept of no office under him. To gain Beaufort alone, had been tried in vain; to gain him as the chief of a party, with Wentworth under him, might yet be attempted. To an extended offer, including Wentworth himself, he might listen without loss of honour: if accepted, a ground for discontent was laid; if rejected, jealousy would still, probably, be the consequence. A message was therefore sent to Beaufort in form, to desire a meeting, to consider of a new government, and, as was added, by command of him who had a right to command it. In this, the object of the Premier was refined beyond all ordinary rules. He knew that to exclude Wentworth would be unavailing; but he might lower

him, which would almost equally answer his purpose. Wentworth, the immoveable, the proud, the aspiring CHIEF, was the object of all Lord Oldcastle's fear; but the lieutenant of another, he would instantly be degraded, and probably disarmed. He therefore resolved to try the effect of an offer to Beaufort, even to the extent of one half of the government, *without* the excluding clause as to Wentworth, which had hitherto made all attempts abortive. The only stipulation, therefore, which he resolved to make, was, that the treaty should be conducted by Beaufort alone, and, as a necessary consequence, that Beaufort should be considered by the Minister as the ostensible chief of his party. If this were accepted, there was no office which Lord Oldcastle was not willing that Mr. Beaufort should offer to his friend. Such was the Italian policy intended to be pursued in negociating a union.

On the receipt of the message, which simply, as we have said, desired a meeting, Beaufort instantly communicated with Wentworth, who told him that under the circumstances he could not but comply.

"It is useless," said Beaufort; "to separate us is impossible."

"I know it," returned Wentworth, "but the terms may have been altered; besides there is a high recommendation, which must not be disobeyed."

Beaufort complied, assuring Wentworth that he was but an agent to hear, but not determine; and never did the friends honour or confide in one another more than when they separated.

On meeting, the wary Minister was most adroit as to his object. All notion of severing Beaufort from his party was abandoned, and pardon even begged for former attempts to overcome, what was still treated as a *prejudice* that stood in the way of *duty*; but though a prejudice, an honourable one. This being set at rest, even the *uti possidetis* was also abandoned by Lord Oldcastle.

"I feel," said Lord Oldcastle, "that the country is every thing, and I should little honour myself, if any ambition of mine stood in the way of an advantageous arrangement. I am, therefore, even prepared to quit my present station, if that should be deemed necessary for his Majesty's service."

The frank mind of Beaufort was struck with the proof of disinterestedness which this seemed to give; and, in the simplicity of his heart, he

complimented the Premier on the purity of his patriotism, which could thus yield his power to a rival, for the sake of the public weal.

"Stop," said Lord Oldcastle, with a mixture of dignity and candour, "nor give me more credit than I deserve. Though I said I should little honour myself, if an obstinacy in retaining my present situation were to stand in the way of a proper arrangement, it follows not that I should *dishonour* myself to procure it."

Beaufort expressing his wonder at the meaning of this, the Lord Oldcastle went on.

"Forgive me, Mr. Beaufort, if I feel I have a right to some personal pride, as well as Mr. Wentworth. His would be wounded, it seems, were he to serve under me; would mine then be unhurt were I to serve under *him*? *I* have already been placed at the head, by our common sovereign; *he* has not yet been so honoured. If the country require it now, I am ready to retire; but it follows not that I am to be called upon to serve *under* one who has almost refused to acknowledge me even as an equal. Still this need not prevent what we all so much desire; it will only be necessary that I and my friends should withdraw from power altogether, and

leave Mr. Wentworth to form a government as well as he can."

He said this with an air of generous self-sacrifice; but to a less unsuspecting observer than Beaufort, something sardonic might perhaps have been discovered lurking in the corner of his lip, when he pronounced the words *as well as he can.*

Be this as it may, Beaufort was embarrassed at the intimation; as the secession of Lord Oldcastle and his friends would leave the government weaker, even in the hands of Wentworth, than it was at the then actual crisis. It became necessary, therefore, to ask whether Lord Oldcastle, by *retiring*, meant to deny his support to any new government that might be formed?

"As to that," replied the wary politician, "I can only say it must depend upon circumstances that may arise. For though I am not one of those who would drive headlong into opposition as a thing of course, because I had laid down my power: yet, even though I might promise a *general* support, who can see into futurity?"

The candour of Beaufort could not but admit this; and his confiding nature, little prac-

tised in the wiles, or even the language of party, almost tempted him to think that these professions of Lord Oldcastle might satisfy his friend. Being pushed to it too, by the penetrating Minister,—who saw that his sense of honour had been touched by what he had said, —Beaufort acknowledged that it might be too much to expect Lord Oldcastle to quit the post of Prime Minister, and take office under a man who had refused to serve under *him;* and such was his dilemma, that he was preparing to break up the conference, when Lord Oldcastle, observing that he had sufficiently excited his fears for the country, as well as his sense of contending difficulties, now brought forward a *mezzo termino.*

"Come," said Lord Oldcastle, "though it is clear that I cannot serve under Mr. Wentworth, nor he under *me*, why should we not both serve under a third person?"

"To find him!" said Beaufort, much surprised, and rather thrown off his guard.

"Yourself!" cried Lord Oldcastle.

"Impossible!"

"And why so? You have great family connexions; great abilities; great command in debate; much popularity. There can be no

objection, therefore, in those who might reject one another, to own you as chief."

Beaufort felt astounded; he drew his breath quick; he thought of Wentworth; thought of the country; and, as a momentary flush crimsoned his cheek, Lord Oldcastle believed he saw hesitation on his brow.

"Mr. Wentworth may have his choice of offices," said Lord Oldcastle, "provided only that he is not *first*. And to give more strength and dignity still to your own part of the arrangements, an elevation in the peerage to your father, might perhaps, by giving you title, though not intrinsically necessary, add an ornament at least to the real strength of the union."

It would be wronging the truth to say that the ambition of Beaufort was not flattered by all this; though he never departed one instant from his prevailing wish to see Wentworth in power, not only influencing, but directing the destinies of his country. Of this he felt there was not a chance, while Lord Oldcastle continued where he was; and as little, should the latter be moved, without coalescing with the Wentworth party. He could have wished some other third person had been named as chief, and actually did name more than one;

but they were all objected to by Lord Oldcastle either as deficient in court interest, in abilities, or in extensive connexions. "In short," said my Lord, "*aut Cæsar, aut nullus.* It is for you to say whether you will refuse to save the country, where you can do it so easily.

The excitement of Beaufort's mind was not allayed by these topics. He was sincerely patriotic; sincerely loyal to Wentworth; and sincerely ready to spurn all personal advantages at the expense of honour. But he was ambitious; and he saw no sacrifice of honour in consenting to be at least the bearer of these proposals to his friend and to his party, with a view to *consult* them.—This was all he promised, and this he performed.

The astonishment of Wentworth, when he heard the result of the conference, is not to be painted. We have described him as subject to momentary starts of suspicion and anger, during which his invectives were terrible; upon the present occasion they were uncontrollable, when he found that his friend had even listened to a plan which he called insidious, and, to a most offensive degree, degrading to himself; and though he was too just to Beaufort to accuse

him of any treachery in hearing it, yet the very thought that he had not rejected with scorn and contempt, what he called an evident design (so evident that a baby might see through it) to lower him (Wentworth), surprised Beaufort into a vehemence that carried torture and death to his sensibility, which we have described as so irritable.

"I will not," said Wentworth, "glance at the palpable snares laid for your own ambition, at the small price of my degradation; I will not inquire into the reasons which prevented you from seeing through such treachery."

"Stop!" interrupted Beaufort, with emotions which were unbearable; "nor glance, on your part, at what it tears my soul to pieces to think you could imagine."

"I imagine nothing against your honour," cried Wentworth. But it was too late for explanation: horror had seized upon the soul of Beaufort; the too sensate jealousy in regard to his character, which has been mentioned, had now got complete hold of him; and, in a tremor which seemed to proceed from a breaking heart, he burst from the house to seek his own home.

There, after ordering the doors to be closed against all visitors, he buried himself in his chamber.

The whole passed so quickly, that this sudden movement could not be prevented; and Wentworth was content to remain a full hour by himself, ruminating over the new aspect of things; during which he repented him of his vehemence towards his friend, for whose return, or at least for some tidings from him, he began anxiously to wish. But his friend came not, and the amiable, though warm-tempered Wentworth, with an appeased spirit, and a desire to atone for his offensive and unintentional expressions, sallied forth to seek the friend he feared he had injured.

What was his surprise, and, we may add, his alarm, when he was not only refused admittance, but fairly told by the porter, that it was his master's last order that he should be refused particularly to *him*.

"I would not be so bold as to tell you, Sir," said the porter, "but for fear there be something wrong between two such good gentlemen; for, indeed, Sir, my master seems quite desperate."

Wentworth, in alarm, repeated the attempt

that night, and again the next day, but in vain; nor did they see each other till they met in the House; when the high-wrought resentment of Beaufort was so great, that the advances of his friend (who still continued to make them) were proudly and moodily rejected.

This did not escape observation amongst those who were most interested to observe; for it had already been whispered that Lord Oldcastle had made overtures to Mr. Beaufort, which had been accepted, and that a quarrel had been the consequence between him and his former friend. The rumour seemed thus too fully confirmed, and both sides were fixed in most exciting attention towards the behaviour of the two leaders. Agreeably to all practice, particularly in party, every thing was at once taken for granted on either side. The Ministerialists openly boasted that Beaufort had agreed to their terms. They named his very office and title, and assumed an air and tone of confidence upon it, which made universal impression. On the other hand, Mr. Wentworth's party, discomfited and imposed upon by what they felt would be a severe blow to their reputation, as well as interest, and confirmed in their suspicions by the cold and resentful conduct of

Beaufort, could no longer restrain their indignation. They showed it by shunning him, and forming themselves into groups to hold conversations, of which it was evident to himself that he was the subject. This maddened him still more; and though he would not retire from the House, fearing it might confirm the suspicions, which could not now be concealed from him, he was evidently ripe for any catastrophe, and ready to lay down his life rather than suffer the supposition that his honour had been sullied.

Wentworth saw all this, and implored him, through a friend, to retire with him, thinking that by soothing and explanation, he might restore him to himself. But no! the unfortunate Beaufort only became the more infuriated. "It is to you," said he, "that I owe the destruction which has overtaken me: it is you, my friend, in whose cause I was employed, who have ruined my fame; and on you be my blood, if it be necessary to shed it."

What this particularly meant did not appear; but Wentworth, knowing his friend's sensibility, shuddered with fear, and as Beaufort would not suffer him to approach him, he fondly hoped that could the night pass over in peace, the next morning might see all things restored.

It unfortunately happened, that there was at that instant before the House one of those propositions upon the general state of affairs, which peculiarly admitted of an inquiry into this too interesting case; and the question was flatly, and with no delicacy, put by a pragmatical, smattering sort of man, who sought to give himself consequence by it, "whether the rumours they had heard in the morning were true." Those to whom it was addressed, asked what rumours? "Whether an honourable gentleman," he replied, (designating Beaufort,) "had agreed to accept a great office and a title." "I rise to anticipate the answer," cried Beaufort, in an agony, amounting almost to phrensy. "I declare the report to be false; foully and slanderously false; and those who have promulgated such scandal are the assassins of a character which they cannot openly assail. I have agreed to no terms whatever."

"Then he at least listened to proposals," observed the member who asked the question.

"No man," replied Beaufort with indignation, "can prevent even the most insidious proposals from being made to him: and I desire distinctly and explicitly to declare, that, although attempts

were made to detach me from my politics, I repressed them all with the scorn they deserved."

This called up a gentleman high in office, and known to be in the confidence of Lord Oldcastle. He was a man bold, rough, and determined, yet cool and wily in conduct, and both from temper and a most aspiring ambition, he desired nothing better for his own purposes, than to signalize himself against the hottest leaders of the opposition. "We do not sit here Sir," said he to the Speaker, "to be *scorned;* and since the gentleman professes so much contempt for us, it is fit I should declare I have reason to believe that within these four-and-twenty hours his conduct has by no means tallied with his present professions."

Great cries of "order, order," but accompanied with greater cheering from the ministerial benches, followed this denunciation. It was answered from the other side with equal determination, and the Speaker in vain for two minutes endeavoured to restore tranquillity, during which two minutes both Beaufort and Mr. Brudenel, the ministerial member, left the house.

Wentworth in an agony followed his friend;

but found, to his dismay, that he had for the moment lost all influence with him. Beaufort rejected all offers of assistance or comfort, insisted upon his leaving him, and demanded, as the price of his ever holding communication with him again, that he would not interfere. The discomfited and unhappy Wentworth immediately returned to the House, and claimed the authority of the Speaker to attach the parties: but it was too late. On arriving at White's, to which he thought one or other might have repaired, he found both there, but unhappily both had been in such a state of irritation that they had already fought. They had in fact retired to a private room, where the perturbation of Beaufort, having laid him too open, he had received his adversary's sword in his heart, and when Wentworth arrived, his gallant spirit had fled. Wentworth hung over him in dismay for many minutes, when smiting his breast, "Alas!" cried he, "I am his murderer," and he rushed from the house.

His night was misery itself, although he had the consolation of Herbert and De Vere, who had heard of the catastrophe, and immediately sought him. A veil must be drawn over his wretchedness, for it cannot be described; but

the wretchedness itself, and the horror which caused it, added one crime more to those of party ambition.

The feelings of Wentworth continued to be harrowed up under this heavy blow, which not only fell sorely upon him at the time, but continued to wound him for years. For he in vain endeavoured to lay this death upon the too sensitive and jealous character of his friend,—jealous even to weakness, in all that touched his honour.

But whatever share this weakness really had in the almost self-immolation of Beaufort, Wentworth could never lose the mournful idea, that, but for his own hastiness, the catastrophe might have been avoided. The thought disabled him from all exertion for many weeks, and he often gave to his friend tears, which fell frequent and fast, long after the funeral, when, as assistant-mourner, he accompanied Beaufort's father, who followed his unhappy son to, what we may call, his self-dug grave. Though the event possessed so entirely the character of a rencontre of passion on both sides, that Mr. Brudenel, the survivor, was almost instantly acquitted of all penalty; yet he seemed so advisedly, as well as so deter-

minedly to have provoked the quarrel, that Wentworth ever afterwards characterized it as a murder, perpetrated in party rage.

We know not what reason there might be in this; but, strange to say, the sacrifice which Beaufort had made of himself, far from saving his memory at the moment, only gave occasion for the vileness and blackness of bad spirits to show themselves. It was even more than ever reported in the world, that this high-souled man had actually entered into a treaty with Lord Oldcastle, to quit his party, and join the minister's ranks, for the reward of high office to himself, and promotion in the peerage for his father. And this false colouring continued so long to gain ground, that De Vere often urged it in his arguments, both with Dr. Herbert and Wentworth, on the cruel injustice of party spirit.

In truth, the best of party men are too prone to attribute bad motives to their antagonists; the worst, too happy to assimilate those antagonists to themselves. The one think to run their adversaries down by it; the others, to raise themselves up to a level with their superiors.

Beaufort was by all confessed the most

powerful man of talents in the opposition, next to his friend. Was it nothing, then, to Lord Oldcastle, that the world believed, without any actual misrepresentation from his lordship, that in opposing him, Beaufort was not sincere? He was supposed by some to have changed sides for the promise of power. Was it nothing, for such a man as Clayton to favour such a supposition? The *parvenu* basked under such authority.

But a truce to this heart-sickening proof of the proneness of God's creatures to tear one another to pieces in the arena of ambition. Let those who have passed through *rude donatus*, and are recovered from this spirit;—still more, let those who have never known it, but spent their hours in the innocence of the shade, enjoy their better fortune, and be thankful.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HEALING.

Cans't thou not minister to a mind diseased ?
SHAKSPEARE.

The conduct of Wentworth, and that of De Vere, were differently operated upon by the tragic story we have related. The personal acquaintance of De Vere with Beaufort was not such as to occasion a disabling paroxysm of grief. He, therefore, was free, as well as disposed, to join in the discussions, little favourable to the public men of the day, which this untimely death occasioned. It did no good to his now nurtured disgust at the character of the times. By degrees he relaxed from his eagerness in the loud investigation which prevailed; but he buried the event, together with all its concomitant circumstances, deep in his heart. There they became objects of silent, but unceasing meditation.

On the other hand, Wentworth at first shut himself up, without being able to utter a complaint.

When he emerged, he took an early opportunity of pronouncing a merited eulogy upon the friend whom the country, as well as himself, had lost; and when he came to the calumnious reports we have mentioned, he boldly charged them upon those, who, he said, had sought to blacken his friend's reputation, because they had been unable to gain him.

The partisans of the minister answered but feebly, and Wentworth thundered in reply. He pointed to many who were in mourning for Beaufort, on both sides of the House, and asked if they would allow his injured memory to sleep unrevenged? Those really innocent of what he so boldly imputed, were intimidated by his vehemence; while the tale-bearers, and those who had dabbled in the intrigue, were uneasy in their seats, and some of them left the House. Clayton, in particular, said it had been a most unpleasant evening; and though Lord Oldcastle was certainly innocent of the charge, the supper afterwards, at that nobleman's, was constrained and silent.

The subject was not soon abandoned by

Wentworth, but excited him during much of the remainder of the Sessions, till the fever of his mind communicated itself to his body, which sunk under it. He fell, indeed, into a deep and prolonged melancholy, which ended in his becoming dangerously ill. During this, and while slowly recovering, he saw few but Herbert and De Vere, who worked upon him in different ways; the President persuading him to plunge deeper than ever into business; De Vere, to abandon it altogether. For once, the younger counsellor prevailed, but not without the assistance of Wentworth's physician, who advised diversion, and a life as different as possible from that to which he had been accustomed.

"It is not merely a change of scene which I recommend," said Dr. Wilmot, "but a total change, if it can be made, of all habits and pursuits, and even, if possible, of the mind itself. I would not only turn you out of doors, but leave you there barefoot, to shift for yourself, without horse, or coach, and nothing but a wallet, or a knapsack. What say you, for example, to a walk over Switzerland?"

"Time was," answered Wentworth, "when such a proposal might have had its attractions.

I believe I had once romance as well as elasticity of limb, sufficient for it. Such things must now be left to De Vere."

De Vere, who was present, caught at this, for he had himself walked over some parts of Switzerland.

"Come," said Dr. Wilmot, "at six-and-thirty, one is not positively worn out; and perhaps I might allow you a horse."

"You must make me forget too many things," observed Wentworth, sighing, "before I can enjoy such a scheme. I once, indeed, remember a very happy time—" and he stopped.

"Proceed," said the observing Wilmot.

"I only mean," replied Wentworth, "happy, because the print of every thing was new.—I represented to myself things and men as I thought they should be; and they always seemed to be what I represented them."

. De Vere grew remarkably attentive.

"And have twelve or fourteen years destroyed all this?" asked Wilmot.

"Pretty well; considering where I have passed them.",

"You are still an invalid," said the Doctor, "and I refuse you as a judge. Our young friend here will decide differently."

"He is a great deal worse than I," returned Wentworth, smiling.

Doctor Wilmot stared. "I shall set you both down," cried he, "as patients for a very different atmosphere than Switzerland, and send you to Monroe."

"Yet, I am for the tour," said De Vere; "only, as we have both seen Switzerland, I venture to propose a less known region in the Pyrenees, and offer myself as a companion."

"The Pyrenees let it be," replied Wilmot, "though I do not think I shall let you go; for you are not fit associates to put one another in good-humour with the world."

"But if the world is so good, will it not do that for itself?"

"I grant you," replied the Doctor, perceiving that he was caught. "Air and exercise, however, diversion and removal from the passing scene, are often necessary in the best of worlds."

"If I am to go, I care not how soon," said Wentworth.

Where parties are so willing, a treaty is easily made; and one early morning at the end of May, while, after a long and a tumultuous debate, which had lasted nine hours, the

Speaker was in the very act of putting the question, to a House worn out with fatigue and want of sleep, the ex-Minister was seen with De Vere, sallying over Westminster Bridge, on their way to Dover. Wentworth had, indeed, been, with difficulty, restrained from pushing himself into the thickest of the debate, which was upon a question of foreign policy, vital to the country, and which he admirably understood. Wilmot, who sincerely loved, as well as admired his patient, was forced to act with all the despotism of his profession to prevent it. He spoke with the authority of a man, who held in his hands the destinies of life and death, and pronounced the latter without escape if he was disobeyed.

"I would exact a promise from you," added he, "that you would not stir from home this evening, but I know you will not keep it."

Mr. Wentworth looked surprised.

"Nay, I don't mind looks," said the Doctor, "I have had too many *party* patients not to know that I am right. So, if you think yourself obliged to me, I tell you what you shall do; instead of a fee, you shall give me a dinner, and I will give up my patients for the evening."

As he had all the cultivation of his profes-

sion; that is, nearly all the most agreeable parts of science, which he dealt out most agreeably in conversation, and moreover exceeded all of his order in what is called *bonhommie*, his proposal was gladly accepted by his distinguished patient, whom he watched almost to bed, and dismissed, after exacting his solemn promise, that he would start, if possible, with the lark the next morning.

Dr. Wilmot was in fact a sagacious observer of what he called cases of human nature, and particularly cases of ambition, combining, as he said they did, so much food for moral, as well as professional meditation. They ended, he observed, often in insanity, to which they tended as violently he thought, as those of the other great passion, love itself. This opinion he had formed, from ample observation in the career of his duty as a visitor of the lunatic establishments of the metropolis; and the only difference he found in the influence of these all-absorbing passions, was, that the cases of madness from ambition were most prevalent in males, those of love in females.

A person like Dr. Wilmot was, upon the whole, perhaps the best friend, as well as the best medical adviser, Mr. Wentworth could have had. And here let us not refuse to pay a

tribute to this most amiable profession, which it deserves beyond all others; that it contributes (and, indeed, cannot be exercised in perfection without it,) to the moral happiness, as well as the bodily sanity of mankind. Other professions have their evident importance, and, from requiring all the great virtues, are rewarded with wealth, and honour. But none, like this, winds itself into an intimacy with the secret heart of man, and thus obtains his confidence, and acquires his love. Indeed it must be so, since perhaps half our diseases spring from mind; and the cure of these depends more upon benevolence, kindness, and discretion, than upon medicine itself. Hence we may, I think, observe, that while the distinguished in other professions are more outwardly honoured, the friend of the sick-room is most personally loved.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.